



BLUEBIRDS FLY!

California Bluebird Recovery Program Newsletter

For the encouragement and conservation of cavity-nesters — especially bluebirds — anywhere in the West

How Can We Build A Cooler Nest Box?

By Mike Azevedo & Georgette Howington

In response to climate change and concerns about increasing summer heat and the effects on internal temperatures inside nest boxes, Lee Pauser, nest box monitor in San Jose, conducted a study in 2021. Lee compared the temperatures inside a nest box with a white painted exterior, and a weathered bluebird nest box of natural colored wood, using sensors that recorded the temperature readings every minute from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. when the boxes were in full sun. Lee's study also examined the use of a sun shield over the nest box.

The sun shield was larger than the box's roof and was attached to the box using screws which pass through the shield and 5/8-inch spacers into the roof. The shield provides shade for the box's roof and the

spacers permit air flow between the shield and the roof. Flow-through ventilation is most effective if there's a breeze.

The conclusion was that a sun shield installed on nest boxes can make a difference in limiting the temperature inside nest boxes. Shields could also be installed on the west side of the box to help during the hottest part of the day.

Painting the boxes white or even a lighter earth tone can be effective. Hanging nest boxes in the canopy of trees could negate the need for painting the boxes or installing a sun shield. (To learn

more about this study, get a plan for a sun shield and see graph documentation, go to www.cbrp.org.)

Lee's study, unfortunately, didn't just point to the possible benefits of different things we can do to lower temperatures in nest boxes. Continued on Page 2

Photo: Mike Azevedo holds one of the temperature sensors used to measure heat changes in nest boxes on hot summer days.



Study: How to Build a Cooler Nest Box

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It also demonstrated the intense need for such efforts. It has often been assumed that nest boxes could be relied on to provide relief from intense heat for the hatchlings. The temperature sensors showed that temperatures were at times higher inside the nest box than outside. This is a tragic discovery and one that demands further study.

This year, Mike Azevedo, CBRP Santa Clara County Coordinator and nest box monitor, is duplicating Lee's study, with some additional criteria.

With the same temperature sensors used by Lee, Mike will test various methods of temperature regulation for two weeks.

He will implement five sensors - four measuring temperatures within the nest boxes and one measuring ambient temperature. (Entrance holes of each test box will be meshed to keep birds out.)

Variables that will be studied include shield thickness and spacer-gap size.

The test boxes will be side by side, experiencing the very same temperatures all day long. If there is a difference, we will find it. Other things we will be examining include the direction of the nest

box entrance hole. This would seem to be a factor that makes no difference, but as long as we are testing theories, we may as well see if any difference is made by where you point the nest box.

And of course, ventilation seems like an important part of nest box temperature regulation, but how much difference does it really make? Varying degrees of ventilation will be tested.

And finally, different exterior colors will also be tested to see how much difference a simple paint job can have.



Mike lives in Manteca, where temperatures in the Central Valley soar every summer. Discovering the answers to these questions will matter even more as temperatures rise throughout the state. CBRP will use the results of these and other studies in efforts to aid in the success of bird nest attempts in nest boxes.

Sadly, maintaining livable temperatures within our nest boxes is only part of the battle these birds will face in a changing environment. The insect population, a crucial part of nesting success, also rises and falls with our climate. That being said, providing the safest nest box possible is our goal and these studies will help us achieve it.

Photo by Sylvia Wright. Tree Swallow checks out a nest box sun shield installed minutes earlier by Sierra Foothills Audubon trail monitor Jean Matsuno in Nevada County.

Trail Tale: Hopeful Signs in Pomona

To set the stage - I met an assistant professor from Hope International University to make a new trail at Ganesha Park in Pomona, in addition to her current trail of 13 nest boxes at Craig Park in Fullerton.

Now the Trail Tale - We spent about 45 minutes walking through various green spaces inside Ganesha Park and placed four nest boxes. For the first three, we saw no Western Bluebirds, though we did see an Ameri-

can Robin, which was encouraging since they are ground-feeders.

After we installed the fourth nest box and were walking back to our cars, I spotted a familiar-shaped bird perched on the fence in front of us. A closer look revealed it was a male WEBL. We were elated, since one month of this year's nesting season had passed and we hadn't seen any prior to this.

His appearance seemed as if he wanted us to know that maybe our efforts today would not be in vain.

Bob Franz, Orange County

About the California Bluebird Recovery Program

Founder — Don Yoder • Emeritus — Hatch Graham

Our Mission

Enlist current bluebirders and recruit others who will help reestablish bluebirds to their normal habitat.

- Locate preferred habitat for the placement of nestboxes suitable for bluebirds.
- Secure monitors to care for the boxes and keep systematic records of the development of young birds during the nesting season.
- Record and analyze all annual summaries of nestbox records.
- Provide a forum (newsletter) through which fellow trail monitors can exchange information and secure help with problems.

Learn More

To learn more about the California Bluebird Recovery Program and other cavity-nester conservation programs, visit these websites:

www.CBRP.org

www.nabluebirdssociety.org

www.socalbluebirds.org

www.sialis.org

If you are looking for a mentor, contact any board member at info@cbrp.org.

Please consider supporting our efforts

There is a donation form on the back page of this newsletter and a donation button on the main page of our website. Your contribution is tax-deductible and goes a long way in helping us conserve the bluebird population in California.

From the Director's Chair

By now the 2022 nesting season is well underway. Second- and third-brood Western Bluebirds and Violet-green Swallows are usually the last. One of my two nest boxes at my senior retirement community produced six White-breasted Nuthatches, of which five fledged. Several other community members produced Western Bluebirds ... I am jealous; I have not even seen a Western Bluebird here!

Sunshades: Several CBRP members are working on a project to test sunshades for nest boxes in the heat of the summer. These will be carried out in the next few months and we will report on the results. A preliminary article begins in this issue on Page 1.

Retriever poles: We are pleased to announce a grant of \$500 to Davena Gentry of the Sequoia Audubon Society (San Mateo County) to pay for the construction of 10 new nest box retriever poles. One of their members completed his Eagle Scout project last year building and donating to Sequoia Audubon 16 new WEBL boxes and three Barn Owl boxes. They have been recruiting new trail monitors and needed some more retriever poles for new WEBL trails in San Mateo County. Please see our website for information on the grant program.



Volunteer network: We continue to work with monitors from several Audubon chapters as well as some Boy and Girl Scouts. This is very rewarding and, hopefully, will lead to the creation of new trails and lots of nest boxes.

Thank you: Special thanks to those of you named below who made donations to CBRP in 2022 (amounting to \$1,044 in the first half of year). Donations for the past year or so have been so low that we are no longer printing and mailing the newsletter. It continues to be available online on our web site.

Data sharing: I want to encourage monitors to contribute to and participate in Cornell University's NestWatch Program using their web site or the bulk upload template (see link below) to preserve the nesting data you collect and to make that data available to researchers around the world. It is not too late to contribute your data to NestWatch.

NestWatch website: www.nestwatch.org

Bulk upload documentation: goo.gl/PqHXiX

Bulk upload template: goo.gl/6eQA9f
(send the completed template to me and I will send your data to NestWatch)

Dick Blaine - info@cbrp.org

CBRP Web site - CBRP.org

CBRP Donors • Jan-June \$1,044

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Mineko Wing	Orange County

History of Bluebirds and CBRP

Note: This is Part 2 of a two-part article. Part 1, in the Winter 2022 newsletter, is online at CBRP.org.

By Bob Franz, Orange County

The first recorded effort in Orange County was in 1984, when Dick Purvis saw Western Bluebirds (WEBLs) nesting in a natural cavity in O'Neill Park in East Orange County. Realizing that they were cavity-nesters and would probably nest in artificial nest boxes, he built 10 boxes and got permission from the park ranger to install them. Dick used a ladder and secured the nest boxes to trees with nails about 6 feet above ground. Immediately, three pairs of WEBLs took ownership of three nest boxes. In 1985, Dick added 25 more nest boxes, and the number of WEBL fledglings grew dramatically.

Introduction of the Purvis Lifter

The idea of using an extendable pole to facilitate installing nest boxes higher above ground was that of Roger D. Thompson of Medford, Ore., in 1991. When insurance requirements in a state park prevented him from using a ladder and nails to attach nest boxes to trees, Thompson made a small, open-ended box about 7 inches square and attached it to a PVC swivel that was attached to the end of an expandable, 8-foot pool pole.

In addition, nest boxes were built with a 12-inch-diameter hook made from strong wire and securely attached to the nest box roof. This lifter/pole device enabled Thompson to install nest boxes at higher elevations than before (about 14 feet above the ground) and be able to retrieve them easily and safely while keeping the nest box level.

Roger wrote an article about his lifter invention for the 1992 Spring edition of "Sialia," the newsletter of the North American Bluebird Society, and in 1994, he gave a presentation at the society's national conference in Boise, Idaho. Dick Purvis of Anaheim, a member of the Southern California Bluebird Club, attended that conference, and was impressed with Roger's presentation and the lifter device.

When he returned to Orange County, Dick started adding a sturdy wire hook to his new nest boxes, as well as making his version of the Thompson lifter with the lifter box element made from thin plywood. Dick



attached it to a PVC swiveling yoke and inserted it into the end of an expandable, 8-foot pool pole - the Purvis Lifter was born! (Photo is from Huell Howser show.)

Dick wrote to Roger acknowledging his development of the new technique and thanking him for introducing this new and

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improved way of installing and retrieving nest boxes.

Linda Violet's two-holed nest boxes

The following are excerpts from "The Bluebird Monitor's Guide," written by Cynthia Berger, Keith Kridler and Jack Griggs and published in 2001:

"You have to admit that California is different from the Midwest. 'I don't think people in the Midwest can really picture the places where our bluebirds are nesting,' says Linda Violet. 'This is a city!'

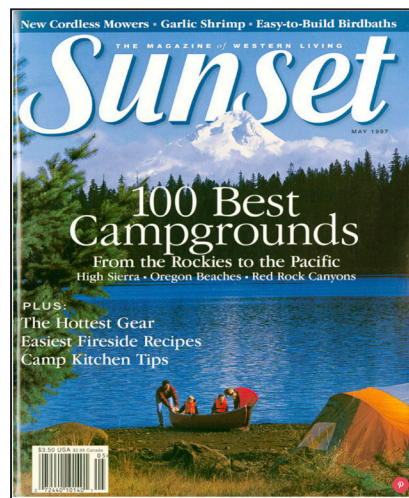
"Linda monitors 43 nest boxes in what she calls the 'typical Southern California suburb' of Yorba Linda. 'We have five homes per acre,' she says, 'it's a high-density area.'

"In 1997, Dick Purvis let Linda take over his 17-nest-box trail in Yorba Linda, all of which were installed on tree limbs about 15 feet above the ground and retrieved with his newly-built lifter assembly. 'Compared to nest boxes on poles or posts,' Linda says, 'we find hanging nest boxes are actually less vulnerable to predation.'

"Linda's most difficult problem was the omnipresent urban bird, the House Sparrow. Linda was constantly removing House Sparrow nests from bluebird nest boxes on her original inherited trail. Then she read of a bluebirder in the East who had nest boxes with two entry holes so the female could at least escape. 'I thought that made sense,' Linda says. So she built three nest boxes with two entry holes and placed them in the worst House Sparrow sites. Linda saw that bluebirds were investigating the new nest boxes, and there were no House Sparrow nests being made. Except for one incident,

Linda says no other bluebirds have lost a clutch to House Sparrows while nesting in one of her two-holed nest boxes."

The expansion of helping Western Bluebirds in Orange County was initiated when I saw a photo of a Western Bluebird with a winged morsel in its mouth in the May 1997 "Sunset" magazine. The page also included a short article about Dick Purvis with



his phone number, so I called, and he offered to come to my house.

We went to small park nearby because there were two nest boxes there that

Dick had installed and was monitoring. I watched Dick install a basket contraption on the end of an expandable pool pole and deftly remove a nest box from a tree branch about 14 feet above ground. When he opened the nest box, I saw a small mass of feathers huddled inside. Dick informed me, "These are newly-hatched Western Bluebirds and within three weeks or so, they will be strong enough to fly on their own."

How the SCBC Was Formed

What made this event so exciting for me is that I was born and raised in Kirkwood, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis, and although the Eastern Bluebird is the state bird of Missouri, I had never seen one in the 23 years I lived there! Dick sensed my interest and enthusiasm and he quickly trained me to

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use the lifter to remove and replace nest boxes and make entries on log sheets. He also suggested that I start monitoring a small trail of 19 nest boxes around the periphery of Alta Vista Country Club in north Placentia - which I did.

I learned that Dick monitored many nest boxes scattered about Orange County, and many of them were in North Orange County near where I lived. So I offered take responsibility for some of these to help reduce Dick's travel. I became so enamored with helping these beautiful birds that I added nest boxes to many nearby greenbelts. As my interest grew, I expanded my trail each year by adding nest boxes to golf courses, parks, and cemeteries - I was hooked.

As Dick Purvis and I traded information about our trails, we also talked about organizing a bluebird club, but since neither of us had ever founded any such organization, we never pursued the idea - until early in 2007. The following reflects a series of events that led directly to the formation of the SCBC.

2007

January - Dick and I each receive a call from bluebirder Sully Reallon, who lived in San Clemente, and he invites us to meet him at It's a Grind coffee shop in Laguna

Hills. Mike Spohn joins us. He and Sully had recently formed a bluebird club in San Clemente and had published a newsletter called the San Clemente Bluebird News. Our discussion centers on expanding the outreach of their efforts to encompass all of Orange County. This leads to changing the name of the club to Southern California Bluebird Club, with Mike Spohn as meeting

chairman and responsible for creating a SCBC web blog and posting weekly entries. We agree to meet on the first Saturday of each month.



February - Dick Purvis prepares bluebird nest box plans and they are added to the CBRP website.

March - I contact TV show host Huell Howser - seen on KCET - about taping a segment on bluebirds in Orange County. Huell agrees and schedules it for April.

April - Huell arrives at my home in Placentia and meets Dick Purvis and we start taping the segment for his show, "California's Green" (photo above). We move to Loma Linda Memorial Park in Fullerton, where Susan Bulger joins us with a lifter in hand. Although it is rather early in the WEBL nesting season, we are able to show Huell and cameraman Cameron nests with eggs and nestlings in them, including one nest

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5 Bluebird Boxes, 5 Nests, 0 Bluebirds

In their "bluebird boxes," Larry Jordan of Shasta County found (clockwise from top): Ash-throated Flycatcher eggs, newly hatched Tree Swallows, Oak Titmouse hatchlings, and three big Western Screech Owl nestlings, while Lee Pauser of Santa Clara County found House Finches - a first for him!



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with Tree Swallow eggs! The taping ends at Coyote Hills Golf Course with total taping time being under two hours - with no retakes.

May - Due to his busy work schedule, Mike Spohn turns over chairing the meetings to me and I become SCBC President.

June - The "California's Green" segment on bluebirds is shown on KCET and I receive close to 100 phone calls in ensuing weeks. (This video can be found in the program archives: bit.ly/3bzipD9m.)

2008

January - Dick Purvis and Susan Bulger receive 2007 Volunteer of the Year awards from the Fourth Supervisory District of Los Angeles County.

2009

January - KOCE-TV airs interview of Dick Purvis by Chapman College President James Doti.

February - Jim Semelroth of SCBC volunteers to be editor of CBRP newsletter "Bluebirds Fly!"

March - Sea & Sage Audubon gives the Sylvia Ranney Gallagher and James Ross Gallagher Award to Dick Purvis for his contributions in "establishing the Orange County nest box program and inspiring many people to participate."

August - Danette Davis of the SCBC arranges for free use of meeting space at the Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD).

September - The SCBC honors Dick Purvis with a plaque commemorating his 25 years of dedication toward helping WEBLs and other cavity-nesting birds.

2010

March - Tom Croom volunteers as treasurer of SCBC. Sea & Sage Audubon hon-

ors Dick Purvis with the Fern Zimmerman Conservation award for his 25 years helping bluebirds.

April - The SCBC presents a Commendation to Mike Spohn for his contributions as SCBC co-founder and treasurer.

2011

NABS announces that the SCBC will host the 2012 North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Conference in Newport Beach. Jim Semelroth is presented the "2011 Outstanding Volunteer Award" by OneOC and the Orange County Register in recognition of his dedicated service to OC Parks and Laguna Niguel Regional Park. Jo-Ann Collier replaces Tom Croom as SCBC treasurer. Dick Purvis, Jo-Ann Collier and I attend the 34th NABS Conference at Jackson, Tenn., for research prior to the 2012 Conference.

2012

In October, the SCBC hosts 150 bluebirders at the 35th Annual NABS Conference at the Radisson Hotel in Newport Beach, with me as master of ceremonies. Dick Purvis receives an "Outstanding Contribution" award from NABS President Sherri Linn. The weather cooperates and the conference goes smoothly thanks to sterling efforts by Jo-Ann Collier, Jim Semelroth, Beverly White, Gillian Martin, photographer Jim Rogers, Bill and Inge Wallace, and the remainder of the SCBC Conference team.

Dick Purvis, Jo-Ann Collier and Bill and Inge Wallace attend the 36th Annual NABS Conference in Aiken, S.C. I am awarded an "Outstanding Contribution" award.

2014

Bill Wallace becomes the new SCBC Pres-

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A Wetter Winter, Better Breeding

Last year, in eastern Alameda County, spring was heartbreaking. With only 5.7 inches of rain, we had no Bluebirds, and the food sources for Tree Swallows and Ash-throated Flycatchers were so limited that 44% of the chicks in our boxes never fledged.

So far this year, the counts are better. We totaled 10.8 inches of rain and there were a couple of light rains late in the spring. Grasses, leafy-plant material and insects are more abundant. Interestingly, nesting started almost a month earlier.

In one nest-box chain that is in an open meadow partially surrounded by vineyard, we added new boxes, and finally had Bluebird fledglings. Some boxes had two clutches of five to six birds.

Another chain, in an open-space park, tripled the number of Tree Swallow fledglings. Finally, the Ash-throated Flycatchers, latest to nest, have five eggs, compared with three last year.

**Story and photos by
Polly Krauter, Livermore**



Left, Sequoias WEBL trail, Cindy Lockhart, San Mateo County. Center & below, Suzanne Young, Santa Clara County



A Bluebird Emergency Response

Story and photo
by Beverly Grandell, Orange County

I live in Laguna Woods and have been monitoring here for many years.

I had been watching a box in a carrotwood tree (photo) where all but one Western Bluebird hatchling had fledged. After visiting a few times, I realized this bird was abandoned. I followed up and a few days later saw with relief that the nest was now empty, or so I thought.

I placed a new bluebird box in the tree, compliments of Mike Isaacson, who builds boxes, and Janna Gaston, who kindly brought me the new boxes. Putting the old box on the grass, I knelt down to extract the old nest. At that moment, a fledgling emerged, flapping its wings wildly!

I was chagrined that I had not seen it in the box. The little thing tried to fly but couldn't. I noticed that its legs looked odd and didn't appear to be working. With some difficulty, crawling around after it, I got it back in the box and made a few calls.

The first was to my dear friend Earl Garrison, who had introduced me to monitoring and, for all the years he lived in Laguna Woods, was more than helpful to me and to other monitors, advising, fixing bird boxes, and being a resource and support in every possible way. Earl advised me to leave the hatchling in the box on the chance the parents would come back.

Janna, who also lives in Laguna Woods, was my second phone call. She immediately brought me some live mealworms to put in the birdbox for nourishment. As the carrotwood fruit was ripe, I dropped some of it into the box as well.

My third call was to the Wetlands and

Wildlife Rescue in Huntington Beach, where I left my name and number.

The next morning, I checked and the young bird was still alive. When I returned home, a volunteer from WWR called. I told her the situation and my worry that the little



creature would die. She consulted one of the vets and called me back. She said the vet thought they could probably fix its legs and that I should contact Laguna Beach

Animal Control. A few hours later, an officer from Animal Control collected the baby bluebird and transported it to WWR.

All of us banded together to save this frightened and beautiful little creature! I am so grateful that my calls were answered with such immediate and kind support and help!

The Southern California Bluebird Club is a wonderful organization comprised of kind and caring, selfless folk bound together by a desire to protect and conserve this and other cavity-nesting species.

The quiet but steadfast efforts of this community transform our neighborhoods every year. Beautiful bluebirds abound, bringing an endless source of beauty and wonder into our troubled world!

I am grateful!

History of Bluebirds

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ident and meeting chairman to replace me as I retire from SCBC meeting duties. In recognition of her successful efforts with the Cavity Conservation Initiative (CCI), Gillian Martin receives two awards. One is the American Birding Association award for "Conservation and Community." The other is a "Conservation Award" given to Gillian by Sea & Sage Audubon.

About the Cavity Conservation Initiative

From Gillian Martin: "The CCI evolved slowly as an outcome of my conversation with my mentor, North American woodpecker specialist Stephen Shunk. Stephen is the author of 'The Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America.' I do not think there was a specific date when the CCI was created or announced. The years 2011-2012 are a fair timeline.

"The mission and goals of the CCI were relatively well-defined shortly before the SCBC hosted the 2012 NABS Conference.

"The CCI was well established by 2014, because in that year the American Birding Association acknowledged the CCI with a Conservation and Community award."

It is worth mentioning that the CCI's work, with strong guidance from Gillian Martin, led to a strong partnership with the arboriculture industry in the West, the outcome of which was the founding of the Tree Care for Birds and Other Wildlife (TCBW) program of the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. The merging of both interests provides a broader and more sustainable future for the mission and goals of the SCBC and CCI. Today, the objectives of the CCI and the TCBW are deeply entwined.

Bob Franz, Orange County



An Unhatched Egg

This year at McClellan Ranch Trail, two nests had bluebirds. Nest B2 had six beautiful blue eggs, which all hatched and fledged as well. This box had bluebirds in it last year, too, so hopefully the nesting bluebirds continue with another brood this season.

Our other bluebird box, 18, was an interesting box. When we checked the box, we saw five blue eggs. The next week we checked, we saw four hatchlings and an unhatched egg. The hatchlings started to grow and we assumed that the last egg had hatched, but after the four hatchlings fledged, we found the same unhatched egg.

This was interesting and we did not know why this last egg never hatched, but there are many reasons for unhatched eggs, including infertility, weak or damaged eggshells, and embryo deformation or death.

Anaya Khanzode, Santa Clara County

Online Mountain Bluebird Conference Oct. 29

The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) will hold a virtual mini-conference on Oct. 29 on "The Current Status of the Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*)."

The goal of this online meeting is to examine the current size and stability of Mountain Bluebird (MOBL) populations at the continental scale, organizers said.

In addition, they hope to shed some light on why MOBL populations are changing and what, if anything, humans might do to stabilize or grow the MOBL population.

Mountain Bluebirds are fairly common, but populations declined by about 24% between 1966 and 2015, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

MOBLs breed across western North America as far north as Alaska; they spend winters as far south as central Mexico, according to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

During breeding season, they seek out open areas with a mix of short grasses, shrubs, and trees, at elevations of up to 12,500 feet above sea level. They gravitate toward prairie



and tundra edges, meadows, sagebrush flats, alpine hill-sides, pastures, and recently burned or clearcut areas.

They winter at lower elevations in meadows, hedgerows, prairies, and flat grasslands with few scattered trees and bushes, pinyon-juniper and oak-juniper woodlands, and agricultural areas.

The tentative list of conference speakers includes John

Sauer, Ph.D. (North American Breeding Bird Survey); Robyn Bailey, Ph.D., and Tom Auer, Ph.D. (Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology); and Brooke Bateman, Ph.D. (National Audubon Climate Watch).

Note: The conference will be held online via Zoom and **attendance is limited** to the first 100 individuals who request an invitation from NABS President Bernie Daniel at bdaniel@cinci.rr.com

When: Saturday, Oct. 29, 2022, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Pacific time

More info: www.nabluebirdsociety.org

Photo: Mountain Bluebird by Tom Koerner, USFWS

CBRP Board Members

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Sylvia Wright, Newsletter Editor

This newsletter uses the Comic Sans font for greater accessibility for everyone



Far left, 'Heir to the Throne' by Eric Fromer, Contra Costa County. Left & below, Byrne Preserve by Melissa Murph, Santa Clara County



California Bluebird Recovery Program

A non-profit project of: North American Bluebird Society
National Audubon Society - California • Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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