



# BLUEBIRDS FLY!

## California Bluebird Recovery Program Newsletter

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



Volume 31 No 2 Summer 2025

### Dana Point partnership is a model for new nest-box projects

By Norm Franz, Orange County

Inspired by a local nest-box monitor, a novel new partnership between the Southern California Bluebird Club (SCBC) and a municipality is thriving in the Orange County city of Dana Point.

A key feature of the program is that the city is paying some of the costs. Typically, bluebird-box monitors are supplied nest boxes and lifters by the SCBC but must acquire poles and supplies themselves. However, in the Dana Point program, the city recreation manager provided pool poles for box lifters; the city manager made nest boxes at his own expense; and the city provided tote bags with gloves, pipe cleaners (for ant control), scissors, notebooks and pens, hand sanitizer, putty knives, and small towels. (As usual, the SCBC supplied the box lifters.)

The Dana Point nest-box project began with a suggestion from a bluebird trail monitor, Margie Black, who regularly attends SCBC meetings. Margie planted the seed in the mind of the city manager of having more bluebird trails and monitors in Dana Point.

There were a few areas of Dana Point that had been monitored by individuals in past years, so bluebirds had been seen in the city and that buoyed the city's efforts to want to launch this program, understanding it was a way to increase the natural beauty of an already beautiful city on the coast of south Orange County.

In January, the instructor of a city Avian Explorer course, Dawn Garcia, contacted the SCBC. (Avian Explorer courses help residents discover birds near their homes and learn to identify them by sight and sound.) Dawn said the city was very interested in developing a program of bluebird monitoring within the Dana Point community and asked how the club could help. Meetings followed and plans were made, but nesting season was approaching fast.

[continued page 2](#)

### When the new nest-box residents have 6 legs and antennas

Story and photo by Mike Azevedo, Santa Clara County

Nest-box monitoring can be an adventure. From bats to native rats and mice, nest boxes can attract some interesting non-bird residents. A number of insects are included on this list. I'll try to cover these in the future, but today, let's talk about bumblebees.

There are about 1,600 native bee species in California. Twenty-five of these species are types of bumblebees. Of these, only a scant few nest in tree cavities, and therefore may show up in nest boxes.

Native bees are important pollinators. On my nest-box trail in a county park, with 25 boxes (including two for kestrels and one for owls), I have been seeing a bumblebee nest pretty much every year. This is a good thing. I'm not monitoring nest boxes because bluebirds are pretty. I monitor because I know how important these birds are to the world.

Bluebirds have an important place in our ecosystem, but I consider them to be a shiny arrow pointing to the plight of animals that aren't nearly so noticeable. Tree Swallows and Bewick's Wrens, for example, nest in our nest boxes, providing pest-control services to humans with no fanfare. So, too, do bumblebees. Bumblebees are humble job-doers for us humans. Tomatoes, for instance, require specialist buzzing-type bees like bumblebees to be pollinated. We need to help our pollinators!

Bumblebees often nest in the ground. If you have been battling gophers in your garden, you have been actively removing the places that many bumblebee species use to nest.

[continued page 3](#)



*Bumblebee on sage*





*Merry Wong and Norm Franz hang a new nest box at the Harry Otsubo Community Gardens in Dana Point.*

#### [Dana Point Project continued...](#)

Now we needed nest-box monitors. The idea was to find volunteers via either the Avian Explorer classes, or word-of-mouth. Each new monitor would select a suitable location near their home; check out a pole and lifter from the city recreation manager; and be put in contact with me. I would help them select suitable trees for the boxes and train them to use the pole and lifter and all that goes with monitor training.

It took a couple of months before everything came together, so by the time nest boxes were ready for occupancy, the nesting season had begun. None of us was sure how many bluebird pairs would take up residence this season in these new and updated homes.

Now, in late June, I am happy to say that 24 nest boxes in 10 trails have been installed or restored, and most of the boxes have had nesting activity. The new monitors are very much enjoying this newfound hobby, and we all hope the partnership will continue to expand through this season and in future seasons.

Dawn Garcia told us that having the monitors active and visible in the community has been valuable. They get a lot of questions about the bluebirds and the program. "The monitors are really sharing bluebird natural history and stewardship to many interested neighbors and parkgoers. It's truly a win/win for nature."

We are happy to have partnered with the city of Dana Point on this project, which is off to a very successful start.

### **CBRP Donors January-June 2025 (\$870)**

Michael Arago, Mendocino  
 Krissa Arnold-Klein, Sonoma  
 Lisa Bach, Karen Verpeet, Alameda  
 Carol Bier, Hillside Club, Alameda  
 Eric Fromer MD (Fromer-Garcia Charitable Fund), Contra Costa  
 Laura C. Kindsvater, Contra Costa  
 Ohlone Audubon Society, Alameda  
 Susan Gearhart, Sacramento  
 Henry Sandigo, Placer  
 Safari West, Sonoma

**thank you**





Nest box residents continued...

Hey, this is understandable. Gopher holes can trip people and can be unsightly. But just as we haven't stopped removing the trees that bluebirds nest in, yet we do what we can to provide replacements, the same can be true for bumblebees. There are nest boxes we can build and install in the ground, and of course, when bumblebees find your nest box, we can welcome them.

In fact, when you are in the position that I am, knowing that bumblebees may show up in your nest box, it is time to give them a nest box of their own. Bumblebees don't create nests out of nothing like bluebirds. They need to transform material they find in nest boxes. I've seen them take over chickadee nests and mouse nests. I understand that another trick you can use is to put a full roll of toilet paper in the box to provide a place for them to dig into.

This is all based upon timing, of course. Bumblebee queens burrow into the ground and spend their "off-season" underground, waiting for their moment to shine. In early spring, they emerge and start nesting, which is when your nest box may become an active bumblebee nesting opportunity.

Bumblebees often enter bird nest boxes through ventilation slots. If you know a nest box is being used by bumblebees, you can install an entrance-hole reducer to prevent predation by birds. You can reduce the hole to one inch. (I'm sure you are going to ask if you might get stung by screwing into a box with an active nest in it. While bumblebees are generally docile, they might take a long, drawn-out drilling job as an attack. They will rise to defend their nest box, so if you can't do it quickly, don't.)

Bumblebees represent one more animal out there deserving our help. Bumblebees in your nest box should be celebrated.

## When a home emergency hits, a bluebird dad taps out an SOS

Story and photos by Rita Robinson, Orange County

I was sitting at my computer, engrossed in something important about who knows what. In the background, a noise kept tugging at my ear. Tap, tap, tapping.

"What is that sound?" I finally said out loud.

I could see down the hall to my big bedroom window. And there he was, Mr. Blue Genes.

"What the heck is he doing?" I kept talking out loud to myself as I rolled back and out of my office chair.

I went into the bedroom. Mr. Blue Genes quickly flew to his post on top of a 10-mph speed-limit sign, where Mrs. Blue Genes was already on alert. I glanced over to look at their nesting box in a giant ficus tree, where I knew there were five pale-blue eggs. And there it was in plain view.

The door to the Western Bluebird nest box was gaping wide open.

"Oh my god, we have a CRISIS!" Still talking out loud.

I ran out the front door and down the steps. Weirdly, an American Robin, a thrush just like the bluebird, swooped in front of me. I rarely see Robins here. Maybe thrushes are one big, happy family, there for each other in times of need. I took note.

I kept running to the garage and got the ladder out instead of the nest-box pole I usually use to monitor bird boxes. This maneuver required advanced equipment.

Indeed, the latch to the nest box had somehow broken. I lifted the box off the tree limb and cradled it gently down to the ground. The bluebird parents had been fluttering over me, but were now overseeing from a nearby tree branch, seemingly assured that their 911 call had been answered and the job was getting done.

I couldn't fix the latch because that required another type of tapping on a small nail. There were eggs inside and no one wants to chance breaking one of those.

I ran back to the garage and got a bungee cord. If in doubt, use a bungee (or duct tape). That would hold the door closed until this clutch fledged.

[continued page 4](#)



*Mr. Blue Genes*

Mr. Blue Genes continued...

I climbed back up the ladder and replaced the box where it belonged. This called for mealworms all around! Back on terra firma, I threw a handful under the tree. There's nothing like a bunch of larvae to re-regulate tiny little nervous systems.

I had placed that nest box in the ficus tree two years ago. (My HOA had the brilliant idea of planting hundreds of these water-devouring ficus trees around our complex 40 years ago, before it was a universally held reality check fact that Southern California is in a state of drought most of the time. That's why planting native plants indigenous to the local ecosystem are the best way to go; they're already prepared for local weather conditions, brilliantly support native animals and insects, and they provide a vast variety of colors and character – just like birds.)

After the box sat empty for months, a young couple finally noticed the open-house sign and flew in for a tour. They hung out on the roof, quietly communicating, but it was brief and they didn't return.

I thought that house would never get a buyer, even though it had recently been upgraded by an artist friend, who lovingly painted a male and female Western Bluebird on the front door.

But then last year, interest came anew. I put out mealworms as a welcome mat.

And sat nearby on the grass.

A brilliantly blue male, his head somewhat cone-shaped and soon to become known as Mr. Blue Genes, fluttered above the worms for a moment, testing the security of the site (and my trustworthiness). He decided to land. The female, the cautious protector of the nest and tender of the eggs, fluttered and then flew away. She did this several times while the male attentively watched.

She landed on the balcony railing up by my bedroom window. He proceeded to stuff his beak with worms, flew up to her and shoved them in her open mouth. This is part of the bluebirds' courtship, mate-feeding.

He flew down for refills. She followed. But again, she fluttered tenuously and flew away, this time perching closer on top of the speed-limit sign (that no one obeys). As a good mate does, he again filled his pie-hole with worms and flew to her, jamming his gift down her throat. She graciously accepted.

This courtship ritual went on for a while. I put out more mealworms.

But then, the winds shifted.

He flew in and landed. She fluttered and flew away. He flew to the rooftop and waited. His enabling days were over. It was time for her to put on her big-bird pants.

She fluttered in again. I stayed put.

She decided to land and feed herself. She finally felt comfortable with me nearby. Mission accomplished.

Since then, and now for the second season, Mr. Blue Genes and maybe a new Mrs. Blue Genes (Western Bluebirds often mate for life but sometimes for just a season) are again calling the painted bluebird house their home. She looks a little different, softer, her pale blue wing coverts more iridescent. She seems more confident and not a bit tenuous with me around, so maybe she is the now-seasoned original.

They're now on their second clutch of the 2025 nesting season and upped their ante from four eggs to five. A good sign, for bluebirds anyway, that the parents are healthy and the relationship is flourishing.

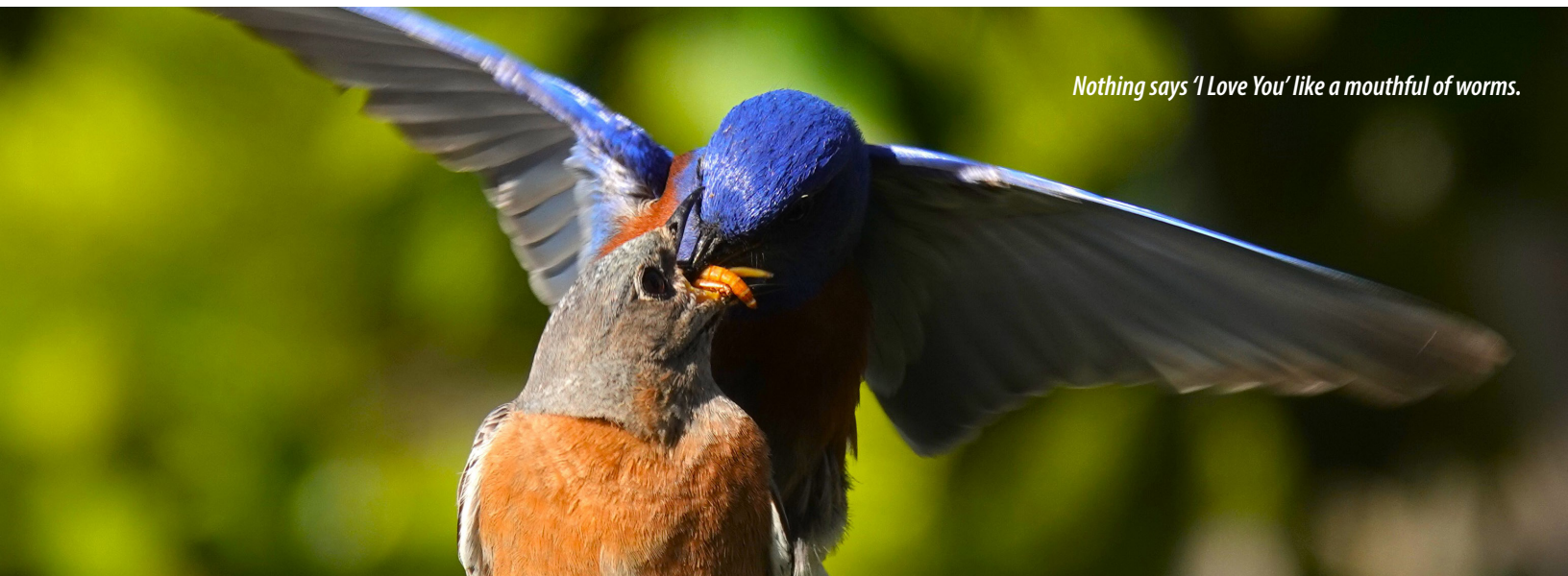
Western Bluebirds work in an extended family system, the first clutch of fledglings often coming back to assist in feeding the second clutch and so on. I have seen a second male come in and join Mr. and Mrs. to feast on mealworms.

Mr. and Mrs. have become my extended family. They bring me joy just in knowing they're consistently there and I can watch these wild birds any time we're both at home. They also eat and feed insects to their young that we don't particularly like, such as mosquitoes, centipedes, houseflies and even Black Widow spiders.

And I'm there for them any time they need someone to batten down the hatch, provide a friendly, one-sided conversation, or offer mealworms all around.

I think I just heard someone knocking. Time to check my window.

*Nothing says 'I Love You' like a mouthful of worms.*





## From the Director's Chair

By Georgette Howington



Dear Friends,

Good news: The 2025 nesting season is a good one so far! As I write in mid-June, we have no reports of extended heat waves, or any local disasters that have hurt the birds. In May, when I was tabling at Safari West for World Migratory Day, quite a few people mentioned that they had never seen bluebirds in their yards or neighborhoods – until recently! I also heard reports about more bluebirds at feeders eating sunflower chips and suet.

Heat shields: We have added a plan for a double-roof, heat-shield nest box to our website. It was drawn by Kit Perry, a structural engineer, from the original Don Yoder nest-box plan. Check that out if you are interested in having nest boxes that are designed for the longer heat spells the birds have been enduring all over California. (There is also a single-roof plan.) We no longer recommend that new nest boxes be installed in open fields without shade from the afternoon sun. Instead, try the edges of woodlands under the canopies of trees, and face your boxes toward the open grasslands.

More good news: We have welcomed two new Board Members to our team – Ronnie Eaton and Bill Wallace.

Ronnie Eaton, county coordinator for San Mateo County Bird Alliance and California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP), is a biologist with a concentration in botany and plant ecology. She retired after 24 years as deputy agricultural commissioner for the Alameda County Department of Agriculture. She monitors three nest-box trails; enjoys training new monitors and educating the public about the challenges birds face; and is passionate about conservation.

Bill Wallace is the dynamic and unstoppable president of the Southern California Bluebird Club. Fifty birders regularly attend their meetings and monitor 2,300+ nest boxes! Bill wrote an article included in this newsletter about a rewarding experience he had with a group of birders from China. With his expertise and commitment to the nest-box program, we are that much stronger as an organization.

Rounding out our board are Lesley Handa, Mike Azevedo and Dick Blaine.

Lesley Handa, the lead ornithologist for San Diego Bird Alliance and San Diego county coordinator for CBRP, is working diligently to establish a nest-box program in San Diego. This is a long-term, difficult process, but she is tackling it with gutsy determination.

Mike Azevedo, our board co-director, is expanding our reach by working with the California Native Plant Society and the University of California Master Gardeners Program. We realized some years ago that due to climate change and further loss of habitat, we must grow into the areas of encouraging, educating and supporting ongoing restoration by planting California natives.

Mike is also a pioneer for the Purple Martin, an indigenous secondary cavity nester that has all but lost its foothold in California.

Dick Blaine, our outgoing Director, is continuing as consultant and active board member. He held the helm for years and we are not about to let him go!

I want to thank Sylvia Wright and Cat Raymond for editing, assembling and designing this online newsletter. Without their artistry and careful attention to detail, we would not have this engaging newsletter to communicate with you.

And that brings us to the subject of YOU.

---

***Your perseverance, commitment to monitoring, and data collection have continued to make CBRP a stable and successful nest-box program since 1996.***

---

Because of you, we have recorded approximately 465,000 fledges and are going strong. Because of you, the secondary cavity nesters are continuing to get the support they need in California.

We want to know YOU and what it is you need as nest box monitors. We want to hear your stories, see your photos and learn about your trails. Your successes, failures, challenges, solutions to problems and techniques. We could learn from one another. For this reason, we'd like to plan for a statewide meet-and-greet via Zoom this fall. Stay tuned.

It is hard to believe that the nesting season will be ending in a few short months. We look forward to receiving your data and notes about 2025. If we record over 16,000 fledges in 2025, that will bring us close to about 480,000 baby birds. Keep that in mind because YOU are the reason we can proudly say that.

Bluebird Blessings,  
Georgette

### Don't forget: Report your data by December 1!

Nest-box monitors, please enter your 2025 season nesting results in the CBRP online spreadsheet by December 1.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Jq1Cg-yjAFAiJIY-ki0FptPRblgmA3LggHqKmtPW35-c/edit?gid=955321359#gid=955321359>

Brief instructions are on the first few rows of the spreadsheet. Detailed instructions are available at: <https://www.cbrp.org/data-collection-end-of-season/>.

We also have forms for recording your weekly visits, by box, trail and species: <https://www.cbrp.org/resources/>.



# FIELD REPORTS

## Uncommon nesters: Chickadees

Story and photo by Patricia Beck, Santa Clara County

Once again, Chestnut-backed Chickadees nested in the box on my Mountain View porch. I know they usually stay away from houses, but this box is tucked up under the eaves and has done well over the years.



## Wait, isn't this a mouse house?

Photo by Polly Krauter, Alameda County

Sometimes you find a surprise when cleaning your bird boxes!



## Nest boxes on poles with pulleys

Story and photos by Mark Sever, Contra Costa County

After talking about it for years, we put up three bluebird houses and one barn owl box last November. All are on poles, with pulley systems for raising and lowering, and are designed not to swing. We haven't seen any bluebird nesting activity yet, though we have seen bluebirds in our yard. But we do have owls! I'm told that if we have the boxes, the bluebirds will find them. We will see. Bat houses are next!





# FIELD REPORTS continued

## Births, deaths and a twiggy puzzle

Story and photos by Judy Graham, El Dorado County

On the outskirts of Placerville, in five nest boxes, I have had a set of five Western Bluebird fledglings, a set of four nestlings, two boxes with no nest, and one box so full of twigs that I couldn't tell if there was a nest in it. I waited quite a while before carefully removing the twigs – no sign of a nest under all that. Unfortunately, the nest with four babies was a disaster. On May 31, I found all the babies dead; I suspect either both parents were killed, or the heat got the chicks. That box had been in place since we moved here 17 years ago, and we've had good nestings there in the past. It has no afternoon shade, and maybe climate change is making it too hot in June. I've moved the box.



## Second roofs as sunshades

Story and photo by Karen Phillips, El Dorado County

I was impressed by the article, "Hot, Hot, Hot Summer: How Bad Was It, Really?" in the Winter 2025 issue. American River Conservancy hosts bluebird nest boxes at Wakamatsu Farm, located in Placerville. Before nesting season began this year, we installed a second roof on some of the boxes located in direct sun. We are hoping these roofs will provide some relief.



## Grounded

Story and photo by Karen Carpenter, Orange County

This little Western Bluebird chick was grounded all day after leaving its nest in Fullerton. After several hours of coaxing, the parents disappeared. We moved it out of the open onto a branch and watched until nightfall. I'm afraid it wasn't a happy ending.





## Placer County baby swallows and bluebirds

Story and photos by Henry Sandigo, Placer County

Six Tree Swallow hatchlings (right) at Traylor Ranch Sanctuary in Penryn. Mom and Dad were buzzing me to scoot, so I did! Note the wasp nest near the roof.

The baby Western Bluebird (below) was resting its head in the opening when Mom flew up to drop in a bug. This is our home nest box in Lincoln and four bluebirds fledged about five days later.



## A fantastic beginning

Story and photo by Jessica Kissinger, Santa Clara County

Our backyard box in San Jose had its first Western Bluebird brood this April – five fledglings!





# FIELD REPORTS continued

## Are you my mother?

Story and photos by Cindy Lockhart, San Mateo County

Mom, eggs and babies at The Sequoias in Portola Valley this spring. As usual, the slight jiggle of the nest box got the Western Bluebird chicks thinking it was mealtime.



## A natural 'nest box'

Story and photo by Julie Decker, Orange County

I saw, for the first time (for me), Western Bluebirds using a natural cavity in a tree. I have never seen that since I've been monitoring bluebird boxes. This was in the dog park at El Dorado Park in Long Beach in a California pepper tree. The cavity was about 7 feet from the ground. The adult bluebirds did not seem to be bothered by the dogs in the area.





# FIELD REPORTS continued

## Steve Bluebird, a busy and successful family man

By Amanda Kindel, Yolo County

This year, Steve the Western Bluebird turns 7 – an impressive age for a wild songbird. He was banded in 2018 as a nestling along the Putah Creek Nestbox Highway, a long-term project led by staff and interns from the University of California, Davis, Museum of Wildlife and Fish Biology.

His unique color band combination (Service over Blue on the left leg and Red over White on the right) tells us not only the year he hatched but also the exact box he was born in. Over the years, Steve has remained close to his birthplace, nesting in several nearby boxes within the same territory.

He's successfully raised at least five clutches with at least two different mates. His current partner, Tacoma, is a younger bird banded as a nestling in 2022 at a different site – unlike Steve, she dispersed before settling down.

At the beginning of this nesting season, we noticed something interesting: The pair was actively defending two separate nestboxes. In one box, they built a fully formed nest lined with feathers – a behavior more typical of Tree Swallows than Western Bluebirds. The second box held only a base layer of grass.

Steve and Tacoma successfully fledged four nestlings from the first box, and as soon as those chicks left the nest, they shifted their attention to the second box. They added more grasses and feathers, and Tacoma is now incubating six eggs.

Steve is famously protective of his nests, often dive-bombing the UC Davis interns as they conduct monitoring checks. He's also regularly spotted sipping water from a nearby horse trough – perhaps the secret to his long and productive life!

---

Amanda Kindel is a museum research biologist at the UC Davis Museum of Wildlife and Fish Biology. More information about the museum's nestbox highways: <https://mwfb.ucdavis.edu/research/california/nestboxes>



Steve  
Photo: Edilyn Lazlo



Tacoma

© Michele McCormick Photography



One of their 2025 nestlings  
on banding day

© Michele McCormick Photography



## Three rescues: How nest-box monitoring saves lives

By Georgette Howington, Contra Costa County

Effective nest-box monitoring takes commitment, consistency, and being resourceful! A nest-box monitor since 1996, I have been asked more than once, "Why check the boxes? No one checks them in Nature." Here are three examples of why we monitor.

### Annette Dale, the jay and the feral cat

After Annette's daughter, Daphne, built nest boxes for her Girl Scout Junior Bronze Award, two boxes were left. The family put one in the yard. Annette placed the other on a table next to a comfy chair on the front porch to add some charm. "How pretty!" she thought, not considering that a pair of nesting birds might claim it. Sure enough, about a week later she spotted a pair of titmice bringing straw and hair into the nest box. Very happy about this, she installed a wildlife camera to keep a close eye on it.

Her joy was soon fraught with concern when she realized a curious California Scrub-Jay was poking her face into the box every couple of hours. The titmice kept working but Annette was alarmed. She installed a wire-mesh Noel Guard on the entrance as quickly as she could. This stopped the jay. But her troubles had just begun!



Next, the neighborhood feral cat found the nest box. She jumped up on the windowsill first and tried to leap onto the top of the box. Annette put wrinkled foil and rocks on the sill. This kept the cat from walking on the sill but did not deter it one bit. Annette then built a fence out of old screens to wall off the box and put barriers inside to block the cat. That worked, but for the next three weeks, Annette kept a close watch on the nest box and the titmouse parents.

Finally, the nestlings fledged, and the entire family safely flew away.

### Jon Hiura and the dead nest

Monitoring his nest-box trail and recording data once a week is part of Jon's routine during the nesting season at the beautiful, park-like Lafayette Recreation Reservoir in Contra Costa County. Since he keeps meticulous records, he knew that the next box had five Tree Swallow nestlings in it about ready to fledge. He normally would not open a box with older chicks in it, for fear of accidentally fledging them. But as he got closer, he saw one of the chicks sitting in the Noel Guard over the entrance door.

He assumed it was just afraid to fly, but he also noted the parents flying above him. The little bird was so still that he was able to pick her up and place her on the ground. He decided to open the box, only to see every monitor's worst nightmare. All the siblings were gutted and dead. He thought the culprit was probably a House Wren, because a predator would have eaten the bodies.

After he cleaned out the box thoroughly, the parents were still flying above and the little bird in the grass had not moved. He placed her back in the box and left. He considered taking her to the Lindsay Wildlife Hospital but felt the parents would take care of her. He would come back in the morning to check. He buried the dead and went home.

That night he worried about the baby bird, not knowing if he would open the box to find her dead, or still there but dehydrated and alone. Upon opening the box in the morning, she was gone. And so were her parents.



### Tom Garry and the falling post

Tom has been monitoring nest boxes for 20 nesting seasons and has learned to be prepared. He keeps supplies of all kinds in the car, just in case. On this clear spring day, he was walking his trail as usual and suddenly realized that one of his oldest nest boxes was leaning so close to the ground that the Noel Guard almost touched it. The old wooden post was falling over! The resident Tree Swallow pair were flying and swooping as they tried to enter the box but could not.

So, Tom hurried back to his car for a metal fence stake, a roll of wire and a hammer, and rushed back to the falling post. After hammering the fence stake into the ground, he pulled the post straight and then wrapped the wire around them securely. When he finally opened the box, he found that the five hatchlings were sound asleep, as if nothing had happened.

As soon as he walked away, both Tree Swallow parents entered their nest box, and he could hear the chicks chirping. This winter, Tom will replace the post with a pole. Until then, the metal fence stake will keep the post upright.





## Eagle Scout candidate Adelina Mbise builds 10 nest boxes

By Georgette Howington, Contra Costa County

Adelina Mbise, who is working on attaining the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank attainable in the Scouts BSA program of Scouting America, recently completed the build part of her nest-box project. She was helped and supervised by woodcraftsman Mike Tischler. Her crew consisted of her sister, Victoria, mother Stacy Readal, and nest-box monitors Tom Garry and Georgette Howington. By December of this year, Adelina will replace 10 nest boxes and four poles at the Lafayette Reservoir in Contra Costa County.



Scout Adelina Mbise was helped by woodcraftsman Mike Tischler. Photo: Georgette Howington



Scout Adelina Mbise (second from right) proudly displays her nest boxes. Others, from left: Georgette Howington, sister Victoria, and mother Stacy Readal. Photo: Tom Garry



## A new friendship with a bird-loving Chinese city takes wing

By Bill Wallace, Orange County

As president of the Southern California Bluebird Club, I was contacted in May by Dongping Huang, president of the American Southern California Economic and Culture Association, a non-profit organization promoting economic and cultural exchanges between China and the United States. She was writing on behalf of a group of students from the Land and Sea Foundation in Chongqing, China.

The Land and Sea Foundation involves young volunteers in community projects in Chongqing, including urban ecological development and wildlife conservation. The group was to be in Orange County for a week in June. They were hoping to visit the San Joaquin Marsh in Irvine, a wildlife refuge managed by the Irvine Ranch Water District in cooperation with Sea & Sage Audubon Society.

Chongqing is in Luhan Province, China, and is China's largest municipality, with an urban population in 2023 of 22.87 million people. It is known locally as "Eagle City" and is located on a migratory flyway for many species of raptors and other birds. More than 500 species of wild birds have been recorded in Chongqing, comprising around 60 percent of the city's wild vertebrate species. Notable wild birds in the region include Chinese Mergansers, Baer's Pochards, and Reeves' Pheasants. The city annually celebrates "Bird Loving Week."

With the help of Vic Leipzig, a Sea & Sage Audubon past president, we were able to schedule a June 5 tour for the Chongqing group of about 70 high-school students and adults. During their

time in Orange County, they also met with the Economic and Cultural Association, the Portola High School Ornithology & Birding Club, and the UC Irvine Bird Club.

At the end of their visit, they enjoyed a barbecue at the Sea & Sage Audubon House. Later we had a lively discussion with Dongping Huang, two students and two other Sea & Sage board members about our mutual interests in combating climate change and conserving wild spaces.

A simple marsh tour has led to an ongoing conversation with a wonderful group of nature-loving youth and adults from diverse cultural backgrounds who have much in common.



Bill Wallace, on behalf of the Southern California Bluebird Club, gave Dongping Huang a bluebird nest box.  
Photo: Inge Wallace

### California Bluebird Recovery Program Board Members

Don Yoder  
*Founder (Deceased)*

Hatch Graham  
*Emeritus*

Georgette Howington  
Mike Azevedo  
*Program Co-Directors*

Dick Blaine  
Lesley Handa  
Bill Wallace  
*Members*

*Communication Director*  
Bruce Mushrush

---

*Newsletter Editors*  
Sylvia Wright  
Cat Raymond

Contact us at [info@cbrp.org](mailto:info@cbrp.org)

Photo: Ricardo Rodriguez, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service





## About the California Bluebird Recovery Program

### 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](http://www.CBRP.org)

[www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org)

[www.socalbluebirds.org](http://www.socalbluebirds.org)

[www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org)

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

Please consider supporting our efforts. Donate via newsletter form or visit [www.cbrp.org](http://www.cbrp.org). Your contribution is tax-deductible and goes a long way in helping us conserve the bluebird population in California.

## YOU Can Help California Bluebirds!

Yes, I want to help support Bluebirds in California. Please enroll me in the California Bluebird Recovery Program. Here is my donation of:

**\$10 Subscriber   \$15 Supporter   \$25 Contributor   \$35 Sponsor   \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your tax-deductible contribution payable to MDAS BLUEBIRDS and mail to:

California Bluebird Recovery Program

1935 Golden Rain Road #5, Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Donations can also be made through our website, [www.CBRP.org](http://www.CBRP.org)

*CBRP is a nonprofit project of the North American Bluebird Society,  
National Audubon Society - California, and Mount Diablo Bird Alliance*