



**Virginia
Bluebird
Society**

The Bird Box

July 2005

See Inside

T VBS Statewide Bluebird Box
Nesting Data Report for 2004

Calendar

August 15: Deadline for articles for the October *Bird Box*.

August 31: Trail monitoring continues weekly through today.

September 1: Begin compiling your data from 2005 season.

September 18: NatureFest in Herndon. VBS will be there.

September 24: VBS Annual Membership Meeting / Potluck Picnic. Beth Elkins's home, Dogue, Virginia, Northern Neck. See back page for directions.

September 30: Complete your trail data forms. Blank ones can be found on the VBS Web site. Send to your County Coordinator and/or Charlie Chambers.

October 8-10: Eastern Shore Birding Festival, Kiptopeke/Cape Charles.

Visit Our Web Site

The VBS Web site offers nest box plans, trail monitoring protocol, trail data forms, news, and links to other useful sites:

www.virginiabluebirds.org.

Researching Bluebird Populations

In her *President's Box* message two years ago (*Bird Box*, July 2003), Julie Kutruff encouraged us to develop questions about bluebirds that can be addressed through research. With a network of nearly 2,500 boxes monitored by knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers, perhaps no other group in Virginia is in a better position to conduct bluebird research. But what type of research is appropriate? It should be conservation that helps fulfill the VBS mission. It should also encourage participation and should be designed so data collection fits easily within the box inspection protocol.

Recognizing the Individual

As Julie noted, "Our birds are not banded, so we don't know if we have the same individuals from year to year or if those we observe on the farm fences over the winter are the ones that used our boxes during the prior spring and summer." That's an excellent point. By banding bluebirds we can conduct a study to answer the question, "What is the survivorship of the adult and nestling bluebirds using VBS trails?" In other words, how many adults and nestlings on VBS trails are living until a given year of their life? If we combine nest-monitoring with banding to identify individuals, we can measure our success at the level of the individual.

In early spring 2004 the VBS Board decided to develop a project for banding bluebirds. A proposal was submitted to the Bird Banding Laboratory, the office of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) that authorizes banding, and approval was granted earlier this year. A Scientific Collection Permit from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries was then obtained. The only ones left to notify were the bluebirds.

Implementing the Proposal

This first year is being treated as a pilot study to test whether our written procedures actually work in the field and to ensure that banding does not interfere with the bluebird life cycle. The study is focused on two trails in Loudoun County: Franklin Park between Round Hill and Purecellville, and Brambleton Regional Park in Ashburn. The results so far are encouraging: six adult females and one male have been banded.

An incubating female is captured by placing a cotton cloth in the cavity, opening the side entrance a sliver, inserting both hands in the box, and gently extracting the bird.

[See next page.]



Banded right leg of a male bluebird
(Photo: David Mitchell)

Promoting bluebirds and other cavity nesters

The Bird Box

Issue 7.1

Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society
www.virginiabluebirds.org

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and artwork** (photos and drawings) for
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by e-mail to a member of the

Editorial Team (Barbara Chambers and
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mail to Bob at: 382 North Edison Street,
Arlington, VA 22203-1221

VBS News

Norfolk Birds & Blossoms Festival

John and Beth Elkins represented VBS in Norfolk May 6-8 at the Norfolk Botanical Gardens and the Birds & Blossoms Festival. The bluebird display again proved to be very popular with all visitors. Unfortunately, the weather was not so nice on Friday, and that kept the crowds down to much less than last year. However, the Elkins did fulfill one of the goals of VBS by providing education about the bluebird and its survival. The main drawing card for VBS seemed to be the excellent display board and the sample boxes with the predator guards. The most asked question was "Why do I need all those guards on my bluebird box?"

Researching Bluebirds (from page 1)

A male is trapped in the box while it feeds the nestlings, using a simple trap that blocks the cavity after the bird enters. Each adult receives four bands, two on each leg. One of the bands is a metal band with a unique number issued by USGS. The other three bands are color-coded. All four bands are placed in a unique, identifiable combination on each bird. The breeding and fat condition of each adult is assessed, and the bird is aged as second-year (i.e., a first-time breeder) or after second-year. Finally, the bird's mass is measured on an electronic scale. In most cases, a banded bird returns to the box within 20 minutes. Every banded bird has been seen on subsequent days tending to nesting activities.

The Contribution

By researching survivorship we will be contributing to past and present studies of bluebirds and bird populations. Very few long-term studies examine the reproductive success and fate of marked individuals across different habitats. This study will help us understand how reproduction and survival vary with age and landscape, which are very important elements for population ecologists. With marked individuals VBS will also be able to complement the Birdhouse Network's study of multi-brood patterns in Eastern Bluebirds along a latitudinal gradient.

All of this can be done with a minimal extra contribution by the trail monitor. While banding does take a significant effort, the most important part, re-sighting the color-banded bird and noting the individual in the trail notebook, will likely add more enjoyment than burden for those who wish to participate. Training will be provided for VBS volunteers who have the desire to learn the art and become safe and thoughtful banders.

Next Steps

The banding protocol will be refined in light of this year's experience. A protocol training program will be developed for other VBS volunteers. A database will also be created to store banding, nesting, and trail facts and attributes for data analysis.

Ultimately I hope the project will enlarge our sense of fellowship with each other and nature. Above all this project should enhance our bluebirding experience by giving us understanding that we can pass to others. As conservationist Baba Dioum once said, "For in the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."

— *David Mitchell*

[Editor's note: A member of VBS since 2001, David Mitchell lives in Lovettsville with his wife, Elizabeth. He has been using bird-banding as a research tool since 1993. He is actively involved in several banding programs in Virginia and is the Master Bander for VBS.]

County Coordinators, Again!

In the March 2005 *Bird Box*, I listed the County Coordinators' names and the 30 counties they serve. There are now 28 of these volunteers, counting husband-and-wife teams and others. If I had counted, I would have seen that only 26 of them were listed! Here are the corrections, with my public apology.

Gene Downs of Botetourt County was left out as was **Mary Penn-Soranno**, who serves five counties: Augusta, Bath, Highland, Nelson and Rockbridge. Mary is also an officer of VBS and both she and Gene are very actively involved. We need a few more like them.

I also neglected to tell you that **Brian and Marci Swanson** not only serve the northern part of Prince William County, but also have taken on Warren County.

We also have added **Orv Lehman** from Rockingham County as our thirtieth County Coordinator. **Nan LaRue** will step into **Dot Silsby's** shoes in the Newport News area.

John Shipsted has resigned from the Henrico County position. So, if there is someone in the Richmond area willing to take his place, we could use you!

Other recent resignations include **Alyce Quinn** from Roanoke County, as she has moved out of that county, and **Helen Ellis** from Fauquier County because of moving and expanding her business. We could use someone to fill their shoes in those two counties as well.

There are 95 counties and cities in the state, so we have a ways to go! If you think you might have time to be the contact for VBS in your county, check this list with the list in our March issue, or on our Web site. If your county is not listed, please call or e-mail me!
— **Barbara Chambers**

Bluer Means Better

[Editor's note: When she brought this item from Natural History, November 2004, to our attention, VBS member Suzanne Miller suggested that, though it refers to the Spanish Pied Flycatcher, the message is that the blue color comes from a substance that's hard to produce but is beneficial. By laying bluer eggs, the female bluebird may also be saying that she's got resources, and the male then brings more food to those nestlings. Could that apply to all birds that lay blue eggs? To our Eastern, Western, or Mountain Bluebird? Maybe this is why only 5 percent of bluebirds lay white eggs: the male doesn't show the needed interest, and the nest is not as successful. Who's to say? This might make a good study topic for a bluebirder and the basis for a great grant proposal for someone to request help from NABS. Would you be interested?]

Throughout nature, color acts as a signal. Juan Moreno, an ornithologist at the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Madrid, and his colleagues, think the bright blue eggs of the pied flycatcher are no exception. But what, and to whom, are the eggs signaling? After all, eye-catching color would seem an open invitation to scavenging predators, yet many of the world's birds lay blue or green eggs. So what's the story?

Moreno and his team recently found evidence that the signal is aimed at Dad. In pied flycatchers, both parents care for the nestlings, but the male needs prodding. Moreno's team noted that the brighter the blue of the eggshells, the larger the eggs and the more food the males brought to the nestlings. The blue color comes from a substance that's taxing to produce but has beneficial, antioxidant properties. Hence, by laying big, azure eggs, the female may— a bit like the cartoon millionaire who lights his cigar with a banknote— be announcing that she's got resources to burn, and that she's passed plenty of them along to her offspring so they can weather the stresses ahead. That message may help convince Dad to do his bit.

Caladon State Park Festival

On Saturday, May 14, **John and Beth Elkins** set up the VBS exhibit at the first annual Caladon State Park Arts and Crafts Festival. Since it was the first festival for the Park, the crowds were somewhat slim but very enthusiastic. Once again, the VBS exhibit was a real attention getter. The need for guards on your bluebird box was the main discussion topic.

The day proved to be very productive when Beth ran into **Vernon Disheron**, a new trail founder and monitor in King George County. Vernon had invited the Elkins to speak to his Ruritan Club last fall. As a result of that meeting, Vernon was inspired to build and install over 30 boxes at the Cameron Hills Golf Course. Vernon reported that already this year he has fledged 30 bluebirds and had five more nests under way.



Hopeful bluebird nest
(Photo: Andrew Chambers,
Chesterfield, Virginia)



A Mother Bluebird and "helper" juvenile from her first brood gather mealworms for hungry nestlings in her second brood. (Photo: Susan Garcia)



A Father Bluebird feeds a mealworm to a hungry youngster. (Photo: Helen Ellis)

A Sweet Treat for Backyard Birds

It's a sweet treat for NABS members, too! Small and round, mealworms are actually the larval forms of the darkling beetle (*tenebrio molitor*) and are a favorite food of bluebirds and many other birds. Installing a mealworm feeder in your backyard can be quite helpful to birds during the cold winter months, when insects are scarce. In the spring, they can even promote the growth of healthy nestlings. If a plentiful food supply is readily available, the female won't have to leave her eggs for very long. In summer this can help the bluebirds raise a second brood.

The easiest way to care for mealworms is to store them in the refrigerator, inside a shallow container that allows air circulation (holes in the cover) so the mealworms can breathe. They will remain alive, in a dormant state. Add a few pieces of apple or banana peel about once a week to provide moisture.

When you're ready to feed them to your backyard birds, place several dozen in a container with slick sides, so they won't crawl away before the birds can find them. Place the feeder a good ways from your house to begin with. As the birds become aware of the food source, you can bring the mealworms closer for better bird-watching – even to your window, using an acrylic stick-on feeder. Those who feed mealworms to their birds deem them well worth the cost, since they allow close-up views of bird species that don't eat seed.

A new program from NABS makes it even more cost-effective to feed with mealworms. NABS members receive a 15 percent discount on mealworms from two leading distributors. New members also receive an additional bonus when they sign up: a coupon for 1,000 free mealworms.

The two companies offering this mealworm deal to NABS members are:

Sunshine Mealworms
7263 Gallon House Road
Silverton, Oregon 97381
800-322-1100

Nature's Way
P.O. Box 188
Ross, Ohio 45061
800-318-2611

Join NABS

Founded in 1978, the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to monitoring bluebird populations and leading the bluebird conservation movement. VBS is an affiliate of NABS.

Individual memberships are \$20, and family memberships are \$30. In addition to the mealworm discount, members receive a subscription to *Bluebird*, a quarterly journal with new scientific findings and a wealth of ideas and tips for bluebird lovers. Nesting boxes, literature, and bluebird art are available for purchase. You also get access to expert advice for bluebird trail problems. And you get opportunities to participate in field research and nestbox design tests.

To join NABS, visit its Web site, www.nabluebirdsociety.org, or send your payment to NABS, P.O. Box 244, Wilmot, OH 44689-0244.

The Long Road to Discovery

My first experience with bluebirds came the late 1950s when I was 8 years old and lived in Midlothian, Virginia. My father had mounted a bluebird box on the clothesline pole in our back yard.

It wasn't until my father's retirement that I became aware of his continuing interest in bluebirds. He lived in the country now and had mounted a bird box on a tree near his house. A pair of bluebirds had nested in it and raised young, and then a black snake had climbed the tree and eaten the easily accessible hatchlings. I began to wonder how any young birds could avoid this fate and grow into adulthood as it seemed so easy for the predators to get to them.

In 1998 I retired after 20 years in the computer industry and began looking around for an interest. I focused on bluebirds. Like my father, I built a bird box and put it on a tree near my house. Almost immediately a pair of bluebirds showed up, claimed the box, laid eggs, and raised a family. One day I noticed NO activity where there had been a lot, so I went out to investigate. I opened the box and saw the nest had been disturbed by some predator. The young were gone. On another occasion, with the same box, I found a snake in it! As disturbing as this was the more amazing thing was that the pair of bluebirds would almost immediately start to rebuild and try again! [See page 5.]

The Trouble with House Sparrows

For many nestbox monitors, the anticipation of seeing bluebirds, chickadees, and Tree Swallows settle in their next boxes each year is tempered only by the dread of finding a House Sparrow instead. What is it about this small brown bird that can infuriate staunch bird lovers?

House Sparrows are an exotic species, introduced to North America in the mid-19th century. They thrive across the United States and Canada near human habitation or areas with reliable food sources. The problem for nestbox monitors – and native birds – is that the House Sparrow's small, 6-1/4-inch frame can easily fit inside a box intended for native songbirds.

Male House Sparrows that defend territories early in the season prevent later-arriving migratory species from nesting. They aggressively defend nestboxes, evicting other species that attempt to nest in their territory, destroying eggs, killing nestlings, or killing incubating females. House Sparrows are also prolific breeders, able to raise up to four broods per season, with each brood averaging between four and five eggs. Nestbox monitors with House Sparrows find themselves dealing with a persistent and aggressive species that, left unchecked, can become a rapidly growing problem. *[See page 7.]*

Long Road to Discovery (from page 4)

It took me a couple of years to realize that as long as the nestbox was mounted on a tree, there would never be any fledglings. So I moved the house to a pole in the yard, but still, with no predator guard on the pole, the same fate awaited the tenants. The bluebirds kept nesting and hoping, though.

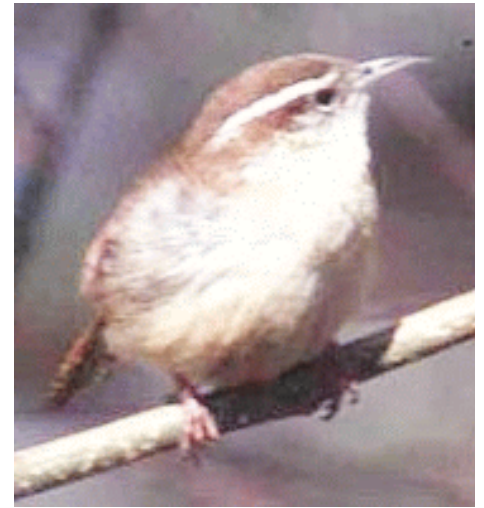
Between 1999 and 2002, I experimented with birdhouse design as well as mounting design. I even made an attempt at a primitive snake guard; a five-gallon plastic bucket with the rim cut off and turned upside-down and suspended on the pole like a lamp shade. Then I moved this box, pole, and bucket to what I thought was a safer place and waited for results. In spring 2003, the bluebirds appeared and all went according to schedule. Then one morning I looked out and saw the head of a black snake sticking out of the nestbox. How could that have happened? Either my baffle had failed or a tree branch near the box had allowed him entry.

It was time to get serious! The biggest mistake I had made was not using the most available tool at my disposal – the Internet! Almost immediately after logging on I found Ron Kingston's Web site with his predator guard design. I set to work building a Kingston snake guard, with a minor modification, and I also moved that pole and bird box to the other side of my yard where there were **no** overhanging tree branches! I also used the Internet to check on and learn about some of the other design characteristics for bird boxes: good ventilation, and drainage and no perch near the entrance. I used them all to begin my second attempt for the bluebirds.

I am pleased to report that since May 2003 I have built six nestboxes with guards and poles and estimate that over 20 broods have fledged! I have a personal trail of five boxes on my 15 acres in Powhatan County and one box at my mother's in an adjoining county.

Last summer, for the first time, I witnessed the last of three broods from the same pair of bluebirds that had nested in my yard, fly off safely away from the protected box. It only took about 10 minutes for the last three nestlings of the season to leave, as recorded on videotape.

I would like to thank all those bluebird enthusiasts who have helped make my quest possible. I have volunteered to be the county coordinator in Powhatan County in order to spread "the word" that took me so long to discover, and I look forward to sharing my experiences with fellow members. *– Tom Will*



Carolina Wren
(Photo: West Volusia Audubon Society
Web site)

Wren Boxes Really Work

Plans and mounting directions for Dick Tuttle's wren box were passed out at the VBS annual meeting in November 2003. Many of us have since built and mounted these boxes from the plans, but I wonder how many have had the luck that Milly Colella of Wintergreen, Virginia, has had.

She asked her son, Darren, to build two boxes for her according to Dick's plans. One was for her friend and neighbor, Nancy Avery, who is also a VBS member, and the other was for herself. They put them up and hoped Carolina Wrens would move in.

The following spring, Milly's husband announced that there were Eastern Bluebirds living in that wren house! She was sure he had to be mistaken, but took a close look herself and found that he certainly was right. This pair of bluebirds had raised and fledged 4-5 nestlings in the box. I wonder if they will choose it again this year?

Perhaps the deal would be to put up a bluebird box and see if the wrens will nest!

The Friendly Dove

I had an unusual encounter with a Mourning Dove some years ago. I was sitting on my patio watching this dove eat sunflower seeds. It appeared to be having trouble swallowing something caught in its throat, maybe a seed. I thought I would help this bird out before it choked. I tried sneaking up on it but it kept moving away.

I brought out a fish net from my workshop and finally captured the bird. I asked my wife to hold the bird while I pried open its bill to see if I could get to the seed. There was no seed! It didn't appear to have anything in its throat at all.

So I took the dove back out to the flagstones where I had captured it, and set it down very carefully. After I stood up and backed away, the bird did not explode out of there as I had expected. It simply started feeding again as if nothing had happened. I thought perhaps it just didn't see me. So I circled four times around the flagstones where it was feeding. The bird paid me no mind and just kept right on feeding. I backed away further. After a few more minutes it finished feeding and flew off as if nothing unusual had occurred. I was truly amazed.

– Tom Clifton



Mourning Dove
(Photo: Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory
Web site)

Cavity Nesters' Corner

The Perfect Nestbox

We usually discuss a cavity nester in this column, and it's now well past time to discuss the cavities we put up for them. Is there such a thing as a "perfect nestbox"?

Marci Swanson sent me an article, "Bluebird Trails and Tails," from a recent newsletter of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania (BSP). With thanks and apologies to the BSP and the author, Susan Renkel, I shall borrow from it here and add a few notes of my own.

With so many different nestbox styles, it can be tempting to choose a box that is clever, fancy, pretty or touted as being House Sparrow-proof. Let common sense be your guide and remember these basic principles.

Lumber: The thicker the walls and roof, the more insulated the nestbox will be from the heat and the cold. Rough-cut cypress, redwood, pine or cedar is frequently recommended. Always use untreated lumber. Treated or painted wood gives off gases that, even when odorless, are toxic to birds.

Roof: It will deteriorate faster than the rest of the box. BSP says the longest-lasting roofs are made from exterior-grade plywood or vinyl. VBS recommends 2-inch thick pine. Adding shingles also extends the life of the roof. VBS has also tried metal, which reflects the sun away and protects the wood from warping and splitting. Be creative! The roof should have an overhang of at least 2 inches, on at least three sides. The more the roof overhangs the better it will prevent blowing rain and snow from getting inside. A slanted roof or a flat roof with grooved drip edge on the under-side will provide additional weather protection.

Ventilation: A small gap between the roof and sides will provide good cross ventilation, a very important item during our hot Virginia summers. Several holes drilled in the sides near the top carry an additional benefit; during winter or during cold spring days, those holes can be plugged. VBS suggests winterizing our boxes using insulation strips and placing putty in the ventilation holes. The box should be weather-proof; if it leaks it could cause the death of nestlings and even adults.

Floor: It must have drainage! Cutting the corners off the square wood floor is sufficient.

Entrance Hole: It should be exactly 1-1/2 inches for bluebirds. Other cavity nesters will use it as well. Though it won't eliminate the House Sparrow, it will keep the European Starling out. It should be protected with a Noel guard to eliminate raccoon and cat predation.

Box Depth: The deeper the better. Minimum recommendation is 7 inches from hole to floor. Depths less than this make inhabitants easy targets for predators. However, with the VBS-recommended Noel guard around the hole, that type of predation is mostly eliminated.

Floor Space: Minimum recommendations are 4x4 inches (or for a PVC round box, 4 inches). But a box this size can get pretty crowded! A larger, 5x5-inch box would allow nestlings to stretch their wings and develop flight muscles.

Easy to Monitor and Clean: It is best if the box opens down on one side. Boxes need to be monitored at least once a week. More frequent monitoring means more fun and it helps calculate how old the nestlings are as well as their growth and health. **Do not open** the box after the 13th day in order to prevent premature fledging. Clean out each nestbox after the nestlings fledge. Side-opening boxes make this easier.

Pole Mounted, with a Snake Guard: The VBS protocol also calls for mounting the nestbox on a 1-inch metal electrical conduit pole. This allows for easy placement and removal.

[See page 7.]

Trouble with House Sparrows (from page 5)

Determining the best way to discourage House Sparrows is a personal decision. House Sparrows are non-native, so the Federal Migratory Bird Act Treaty of 1918 does not prohibit trapping them or interfering with their breeding activities. Some monitors employ passive methods such as eliminating problem feeder stations and avoiding filler grain feed such as milo, millet, or cracked corn; placing boxes away from human-disturbed areas; placing monofilament line in front of a nestbox; and plugging the entrance hole until a desired species arrives to breed.

Other control methods involve removing House Sparrow nests, eggs, or both. However, House Sparrows are capable of rebuilding nests quickly. Some people advocate trapping and relocating House Sparrows, but this only creates a problem elsewhere. Another strategy is to stop providing nestboxes in areas with House Sparrows. Unless you are willing to discourage House Sparrows, putting up nestboxes may simply help boost their numbers.

Because House Sparrows are such fierce competitors and can multiply and spread quickly, it's widely assumed that they are detrimental to populations of native cavity nesters. Although native birds often lose in the competition for nestboxes, scientific studies are lacking to show whether House Sparrows cause widespread declines of native songbird populations.

The Birdhouse Network (TBN) is gathering data about the competition that cavity nesters encounter. Preliminary data from 2003 show that House Sparrows account for 54 percent of nestbox competitors, followed by wasps (17 percent), squirrels, mice, and European Starlings (4 percent each), bees (2 percent), and other competitors (13 percent), and unknown (2 percent). TBN data show that in 92 percent of cases, nestbox monitors interfere to prevent House Sparrows from breeding. If you monitor nestboxes, please join the Birdhouse Network and help gather much-needed data about the impact of House Sparrows, starlings, and other competitors on the breeding success of cavity-nesting birds.

– Tina Phillips, *The Birdhouse Network, Cornell Lab*

The Perfect Nestbox (from page 6)

Onto this pole is mounted, below the box, a metal stove pipe “snake guard” with a cap. It has been 99 percent effective in eliminating snake predation. See the VBS Web site for the plans.

Habitat: Bluebirds require approximately one acre of open mowed area (mowed at least four times a year) for hunting the insects that make up 70-80 percent of their diet during nesting season. This open area should be dotted with a few large trees, which offer protection for the parents and the fledglings. Perches, natural or man-made, help bluebirds hunt their prey. **Don't use pesticides** where there are nestboxes. It poisons the birds' prey base, and you may never know how it affected the birds in your boxes.

Water: All birds need access to clean, fresh water!

Landlord: VBS and BSP both encourage responsible nestbox owners. That is someone who loves and respects nature and is willing to protect native species of all kinds. This may require putting up a house for another cavity nester alongside your bluebird box, and/or removing the nest and eggs of the non-native House Sparrow. The starling should not be a problem if you use a 1-1/2 inch hole. This landlord would not trap and release a House Sparrow in another location. That does not solve the problem! There are both active and passive methods of controlling House Sparrows. Raptor and reptile rehabilitators no longer welcome these trapped birds because they are one of the known reservoirs for the West Nile virus. See “The Trouble with House Sparrows” on page 5, or contact VBS for more ideas. – Barbara Chambers

Wintertime Roosting

While looking out our kitchen window a little while ago [March 1], I saw a flock of eight bluebirds flying around and landing on the “porch” of our bluebird house. Four of them went in, one after the other.

That house has a fresh “nest” of dry grass in the bottom. I checked the house about a week ago; the birds put the grass in it, not me. I've read about bluebirds roosting together in birdhouses to stay warm, and it's apparent that's what these were doing. The temperature is about 20 degrees, there are 10 inches of snow on the ground (and the roof of the birdhouse), it is still snowing, and the wind is blowing hard.

– Rick Webb, *Highland County*

Resilient Bluebirds

The bluebirds in Roanoke are a hardy bunch. On my Hunting Hills Golf Course trail of 35 nest boxes, I've already fledged 101 bluebirds during first nesting session, and have 71 young and about 20 more eggs during this second nesting. At my Hidden Valley Golf Course trail of 33 nest boxes, 77 bluebirds fledged during the first nesting, and there are now 52 young plus another 17 eggs for the second nesting. At both trails this July, I'm ahead of my count for last year.

The Hidden Valley Golf Course is now closed for the season. They are redoing most of the greens using heavy construction equipment very near several nestboxes. At one box, bulldozers came within five feet, but the second nesting hatched five new birds in early July. A new green is being built right next to another nestbox, and some dirt piles have ended up at the base of it. I had planned on moving that box because it contained five eggs. But the eggs hatched despite the construction, so I left it alone. The adult birds don't seem too bothered at all by the activity.

– Earl Morris

Come Shop the VBS Store at the Annual Meeting

On **Saturday, September 24!** New T-shirts! New gifts!

Join Us!

Become a member of VBS and receive:

- T** All the information you need to start and maintain a successful bluebird trail.
- T** Access to working trails, workshops, and educational programs.
- T** Our newsletter, *The Bird Box*, in July, October, and March.

Annual membership is \$10 Individual, \$15 Family.

Send your check, payable to the Virginia Bluebird Society, to:

Charlie Chambers
Treasurer, VBS
8911 Moreland Lane
Annandale, VA 22003-3915



Come to the Annual Meeting

Beth and John Elkins invite all VBS members to their home, Bistineau Place, at 13450 Cleve Drive, King George, Virginia, for our Annual Membership Meeting on **Saturday, September 24**. It is a potluck picnic, so bring a side dish or dessert. Check the VBS Web site and your e-mail in-box for updates.

Directions: From I-95 south, Fredericksburg, take Virginia Route 3 east toward Fredericksburg/King George. Turn right onto Port Conway Road, Virginia Route 607, approximately two miles past Rick and Van's Produce Barn, with the **red roof**.

Then follow Port Conway Road toward Dogue. At Dogue, look for Buddie's General Store (no longer in business) on your right. Turn right at Buddie's onto Cleve Drive, Virginia Route 692. Follow Cleve Drive for ½ mile, then turn right onto the entrance road (bluestone gravel) with an old black wood fence. Follow the gravel driveway approximately ½ mile to Bistineau Place on the Rappahannock River.

See you there!

Virginia Bluebird Society
8911 Moreland Lane
Annandale, VA 22003-3915

**DATED
MATERIAL**

2004 VIRGINIA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY STATEWIDE BLUEBIRD BOX NESTING DATA¹

County	Trail Leader/County Coordinator	Number of boxes	Bluebirds				Chickadees				Tree Swallows				House Wrens				Other				
			Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	
Albemarle	Kingston	410		61	58	###	4	26	26	56	10	51	40	391				8	1	5	5	44	
Augusta	Penn			727	714	583								130				15					
Bath	Bratton	15	9	35	32	27					7	45	42	37	4	13	13	13					
Botetourt	Downs	194	92	363	339	375	17	73	57	62	66	349	326	334	12	60	60	60					
Campbell	Devan	10	4	12	12	12					1				2	9	6	6					
Clarke	Patten	108	46	205	152	139	1	1	0	0	66	350	293	288	49	269	174	149					
Fairfax	Salcedo-Roper	495	280	###	###	###	55	211	173	171	121	329	278	279	129	430	398	386	11	50	29	29	
Fauquier	Taylor	57	30	107	70	70	3	7	7	7	3	12	4	4	1	6	6	6	14	33	24	24	
Fredrick	Hickerson	30	6	30	28	28	2	5	5	5	11	57	41	41									
Fredricksburg	Little	12	4	15	10	10	1	5	5	5	2	9	8	8	1	4	4	4					
Giles	Spiegel	16	16	63	57	57	1	5	3	3		4	18	16					1	4	4	4	
Goochland	Rapalee	22	21	87	80	68	2	12	12	12	3	12	12	12					1	3			
Henry	Doyle	80	116	490	445	429	1	5	5	5													
Highland	Bratton	120	68	254	223	203					74	328	287	264	8	32	19	19					
James City	Devan, Berg	29	40	145	119	96													6	26	24	15	
King George	Elkins	26	7	30	29	28	3	16	16	14													
Loudoun	Hamilton	130	88	385	310	286	1	7	6	6	42	201	173	168	42	159	104	107	62	76			
Montgomery	Opengari	30	25	104	69	87	0	1	5	3	3	0	24	109	92	87							
Newport News	LaRue	40	19	65	58	58	4	19	18	18					5	21	20	20	3	5	5	5	
Northumberland	Newsome	21	15	53	46	46	3	9	8	8													
Prince William	Little	125	107	465	407	405	7	39	29	24	30	144	126	125	9	48	38	29					
Rockingham	Scott	59	39	148	127	133	1	7	7	7	21	102	89	92					6	7	4	4	
Spotsylvania	Elkins	34		245	205	200															55	32	25
Stafford	Nasca	13	9	43	31	28					1	5	4	0									
Warren	Morrison	12	12	51	43	43	1	5	0	0	9	41	23	16	4	16	10	10					
W. Virginia ²	Hickerson	39	13	63	49	49					10	47	33	33									
GRAND TOTALS ³		###	###	###	###	###	107	453	382	406	480	###	###	###	358	###	852	832	105	264	127	150	

- Notes:
1. In a few instances, non-reporting or underreporting of some data makes for apparently inconsistent results, e.g. see total BB eggs vs hatched (however, numbers of fledglings were *always* reported).
 2. One member, John Hickerson, travels regularly in West Virginia, and monitors trails in Inwood and Falling Waters Counties.
 3. Counting all species, 9308 birds were fledged.