



Nest Box News

www.southcarolinabluebirds.org



Volume 7, Issue 2

Spring 2018

An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

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Webster's dictionary defines the word **"takeover"** to *assume control or possession of*. That's the word I scribbled in my notes after doing my trails today. I have *never* had this happen before, but this season, my 7th, one trail alone had three out of eight boxes "taken over"! The Bluebirds are doing the "taking" and I feel sorry for the "takees", usually a Chickadee or Brown-headed Nuthatch. Is this a result of a late nesting start on my trails? Or are there some "bully Bluebirds" out there? Either way, the future eggs of *these*

nests sure are going to have a soft base to hatch on! Keep notes while you monitor your trails this season; remember, these little guys didn't come with an instruction manual!

Terry McGrath

Check out the Top 10 list of the *most strange looking birds* in the world...although all birds are special, these 10 have faces only a Mother could love... See **pg. 13**

Today I will be happier than a bird with a French fry...

Toni Nelson

DID YOU
KNOW ?

President's Perspective...

By Mike DeBruhl

Our new nesting season is truly underway with an impressive abundance of feathered friend activity. We are now immersed in the active monitoring of over 1,100 nest boxes on our trails across the state. This includes new members joining us, adding their trails in Celadon Community in Beaufort, Seabrook Island, Lexington, Florence, and even "across the border" in Grove City and Augusta, Georgia ! Monitors are reporting multiple Bluebird, Chickadee, Wood Duck, Tufted Titmouse, Nuthatch, and Carolina Wren nests (and even a Kestrel) eggs, and several first brood fledglings. Ain't Nature grand ...and isn't it wonderful to be able to observe and experience it firsthand?

As some of you may have seen in the *Aiken Standard*, your SCBS recently donated and installed several nest boxes and poles (with baffles) to Great Oak Facility of the Aiken Therapeutic Riding Center. SCBS is very honored and excited to support this wonderful new facility that provides life therapy, training, and enjoyment for so many in need. Member Linda Honeycutt is monitoring this new trail and we are confident that the Bluebirds will bring additional happiness and joy to participants. You can take pride in your Society as we begin a unique partnership with ATRC and add another dimension to the life changing therapy provided at Great Oak.

We are very pleased to announce that our redevelopment and substantial upgrading of our SCBS website is almost complete and that it will be up and running very soon. It will include several new features, including the ability to make donations and pay our membership dues Online !!

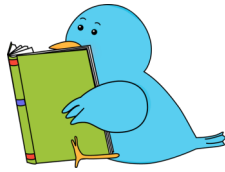
Our educational presentations remain in demand by garden clubs, conservation and civic organizations, schools, and neighborhood groups throughout South Carolina and Georgia. Our efforts and information programs are making a difference - the "Bluebird chatter" and awareness continues to expand. We are receiving great questions and comments via our Facebook page and directly from members and friends...even a few from Europe.

Just a reminder - - if you have not yet joined NABS (you should have received an invitation from me earlier), now would be a great time to do so. We are very close to being the NABS Affiliate with most members, so **help us reach # 1** and enjoy all that NABS has to offer.

Many thanks for contributing to our continued growth, great service offerings and presentations, and to those who represent us so well at many events.

See you on the Trails..... *Mike*

Insider News!



They're baaaack! The hummingbirds are here so I thought I'd share these feeder facts:

The Recipe

4 parts hot water to one part sugar (not honey or sugar substitutes) Really hot water is fine unless you are going to make extra to store in the fridge. Dump the red dye. It's not necessary and may be harmful, though the scientists are still studying this. Change your water every few days; more in really hot weather. And don't forget to deep clean the feeder, mold is not good for anyone!



Lifetime Memberships are available. If you're interested in finding out more, contact Mary Shultz at: shultzim@att.net. And speaking of the holidays, a Lifetime membership would be the perfect gift for that guy or gal in your life that has everything!



For information on joining NABS, see <http://nabluebirdsociety.org>

For information on bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds in SC,

go to <http://southcarolinabluebirds.org>

*DON'T MISS
THE DEADLINE!*

Deadlines for contributions to the Nest Box News are: Jan 15, April 15, July 15 and Oct 15 send your pictures, comments or articles to:

mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net



Use **Amazonsmile** for your online shopping!! When you shop, designate SCBS as your non-profit charity of choice and they will donate 0.5% of your purchase total to SCBS That's one penny for every \$2.00 spent! Hey, it all adds up!



1st nest of Brown-Headed Nuthatches!

Photo by: Glen Hendry

Pit Stop in North Augusta

By Anna Sheets

This is an annual event that I have observed in my neighborhood in North Augusta for many years now. In the second or third weekend in February, hundreds of American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) stop on our street for a rest and eating layover. They are all over the lawns, hopping and pecking for those earthworms to sustain them, all over the trees and bushes, chirping and making a constant verbal racket and flying off in mass with any approaching car or person. I'm always glad to see them as they represent one of the signs that spring is coming. Where did they come from and where are they going to. I don't know, but I am glad to see them. Most of the flock is gone the next day, although there are a few that stay a day or two longer.

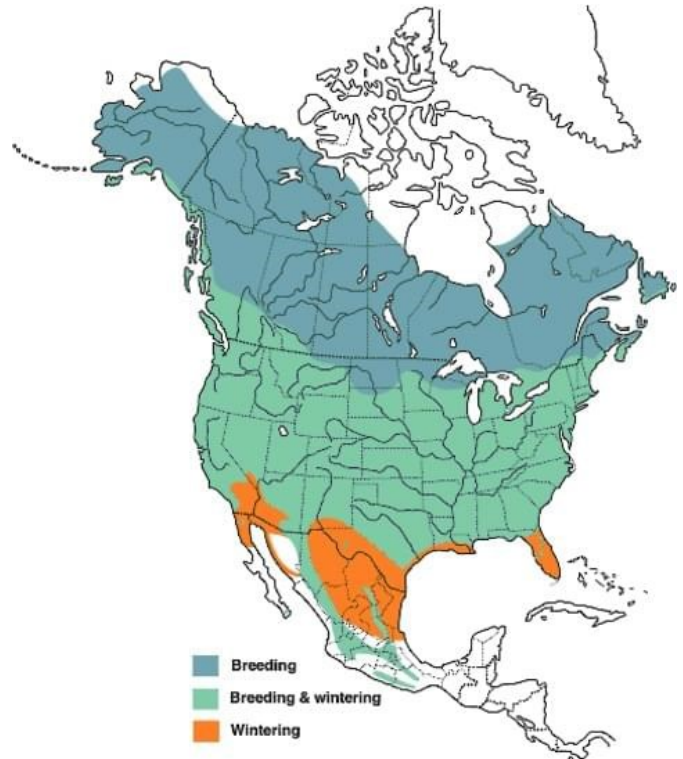
So I thought, I should learn more about these familiar birds. They do most of their food hunting on the ground, running and then pausing and pecking for earthworms by sight apparently, instead of the old wives tales that they can hear the earthworm crawling. They lay usually 3-7 pale blue or "robin's-egg blue" eggs. Incubation is 12-14 days by the female. Both parents feed the young and they fledge in 14-16 days. Usually there are 2 broods per season and sometime 3. The nests are on branches several feet off the ground, but can be, at times, on ledges of houses, barns or bridges. The nest is made of grasses, debris, twigs held together with mud and lined with fine grasses and plant fibers.

Robins migrate when the ground freezes, especially in the North and they can't get to those earthworms and all the fat caterpillars are gone. They do eat berries, but there is not enough to feed all those robins, so they migrate to the Gulf States and Mexico. So why don't they stay there year around, some do and some migrate; it's very variable. In the south, the summers are very hot. This stresses the robins and heat can dry the earthworms which makes them retreat further into the earth and so the robins migrate north following an imaginary 37 degree temperature line called an isotherm. This indicates the temperatures are warming; the snow is melting, the farmers are starting to plow their fields and expose the earthworms. Even though the winters are brutal; the summers are pleasant and the food source is abundant and so naturally this becomes good breeding grounds. If you provide them a good constant food source in the winter and shelter, they will stay around your yard and breed in the spring.



The red, red, robin goes bob, bob, bobbing along at Anna & David Sheets' house...

Photos by: Anna Sheets



Cool Facts:

- Robins eat a lot of fruit in fall and winter. When they eat honeysuckle berries exclusively, they sometimes become intoxicated.
- The oldest recorded American Robin was 13 years and 11 months old.

Tales From The Trails by: Terry McGrath

So my monitor book said that box #22 on my trail at Midland Valley Golf Club should have eggs. As I approached the box, I stood to the side and knocked. Nothing. Upon opening the box, I am face to face with a Mama Blue. I start to close the box so as not to disturb her, then I think, "Wait a minute! I don't know how many eggs and since I won't be here next week, I really *need* this data!" So I reopen the box and slide my hand, palm up, ever so smoothly to get her to stand. I can feel some eggs, but can't get a count. I gently grasp her body, keeping her wings folded against her and lift her out, count the now unobstructed eggs (there are five) and set her back on the nest. Nary a peep or protest-she must have known I meant no harm! The next box, #23, same situation-except this over indulgent Mama Blue thought if *some* pine straw is good, *ALOT* would be better! Her nest was clear to the top but she was clear at the bottom! So I repeated the count like the previous box, (five eggs again) and this time she left me a souvenir —a nice warm "slice"!!

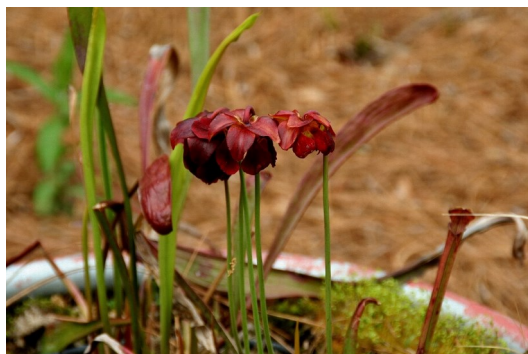
When you think life is a little boring, consider volunteering to be a Trail Monitor! The pays lousy, the hours are long...but *oh-h-h-h*, those fabulous memories!!



***Here's
lookin' at
you, kid!***

Photo by: Terry McGrath

The first Friends Walk & Talk on April 14th proved to be fun and informative! Ron Brenneman and Brandon Heitcamp led a dozen Friends of the SBAC (Silver Bluff Audubon Center) on a tour of the SCBS Bluebird trail there. Many boxes had nesting activity and there were plenty of eggs! A bonus visit to a moist area of the forest resulted in some beautiful, but endangered, pitcher plants. Some of the SBAC Friends went to the stork ponds where the adult Bald Eagle was in full view guarding his nest. Jack Rogers and his wife Carolyn, really enjoyed the walk and he shared some great photos!



***Photos by:
Jack Rogers***



Friends of Audubon Silver Bluff

sbacfriends@gmail.com

803-443-2077

SAVE THE DATE

Member Meetings*

7:00 pm

April 23, 2018

May 21, 2018

June, July, August

Summer Break

September 24, 2018

October 22, 2018

November 19, 2018

No Meeting *Merry*

Christmas

Board Meetings*

5:00 pm

May 14, 2018

August 13, 2018

November 12, 2018

*** all meetings held at Birds & Butterflies**

PRESENTATIONS

Mar 24 - - [WBU](#) ... Mt. Pleasant, SC

May through July - - [Aiken's Farmer's Market](#)...Aiken

Apr 21 - - [Earth Day](#) ... Aiken

Apr 21 - - [Earth Day](#) ... Wingards – Lexington, SC

May 8 - - [Hillside](#)... Augusta, GA

May 23 - - [Johnston GC](#) ... Johnston, SC

October 9 - - [Aiken Master Gardeners](#)...Aiken

TBD - - [Sun City Birders](#) ... Bluffton, SC

TBD - - [Cypress Gardens](#) ... Beaufort, SC

TBD - - [Palmetto Hall Bird Club](#) ... HHI, SC

TBD - - [Mount Vintage](#) ... No. Augusta, SC

TBD - - [Heathwood Hall](#)...Columbia, SC

TBD - - [Celadon Community](#)...Beaufort, SC

*We can always use your
help, ideas, photos and
comments...*



Birds & Butterflies of Aiken - 2018 Nature Series Schedule January - April

"The purpose of Birds & Butterflies seminars and field trips are to foster the love and appreciation of the natural things God has created for our enjoyment."

Tuesday, January 9 **Identifying Birds In Our Area**

If you want to improve your bird ID skills this is the seminar for you. We will provide tips to identify more than 60 species of birds that are either residents or migrants to our area. Learn what field guides are available to help you. This continues to be a very popular seminar.

Tuesday, February 6 (NEW) **Migration: Are You From South Carolina?**

Migration as it pertains to South Carolina shorebirds and seabirds will be defined. We will discuss information gained from following shorebirds and seabirds on migration, how birds are followed, and give specific examples from South Carolina. Presented by Mary-Catherine Martin, Wildlife Biologist with the SCDNR.

Tuesday, February 13 **Owl Prowl at Anderson Pond**

Join us after dark as we learn about our native owls and hear (and possibly see) owls in the wild. Led by Paul Koehler, Director of the Silver Bluff Audubon Center. We will meet at the Anderson Pond site on Anderson Pond Road (approximately 2 miles off of Silver Bluff road) at 6:30PM. Limited to 25 participants. Rain date Thursday, February 15. Wear footwear for walking and bring a flashlight.

Tuesday, February 20 **Owl Prowl at Silver Bluff Audubon Center**

Join us after dark as we learn about our native owls and hear (and possibly see) owls in the wild. Led by Paul Koehler, Director of the Silver Bluff Audubon Center, we will meet at the Visitors Center at 6:30PM. Maps are available at Birds & Butterflies. Limited to 25 participants. Rain date February 22.

Saturday, February 24 (FREE) **Build a Bluebird Nest Box**

Kids 12 and under can learn about bluebirds and build a bluebird nest box to take home. The South Carolina Bluebird Society will be a partner in this project. Parents welcome and encouraged. Limited to 20 kids. The program begins at 10:00AM.

Tuesday, March 6 **How to Attract & Enjoy Eastern Bluebirds & Other Cavity Nesters**

Learn how to attract this common and beautiful bird to your yard. We will discuss nest box requirements, installation and placement of boxes, feeding bluebirds and monitoring nests. An information table will be available from the South Carolina Bluebird Society.

Tuesday, March 20 (NEW) **Ecology of the Gopher Tortoise in South Carolina**

Presented by Dr. Tracey Tuberville, Associate Research Scientist, SREL and Rebecca McGee, UGA Graduate Student. An interesting and informative presentation about this uncommon, large, terrestrial tortoise in our area.

(over)

2018 Nature Series, continued...

TBA **Field Trip to the Gopher Tortoise Preserve**

Learn first- hand about the research being conducted on the gopher tortoise and other interesting features of the Gopher Tortoise Preserve, which is managed by the SC Department of Natural Resources. The field trip will be led by Dr. Tracey Tuberville, Dr. Kurt Buhlmann and Rebecca McGee of the Savannah River Ecology Lab, and Barry Kessler, Wildlife Biologist with the SC Department of Natural Resources. Tour will begin at 9:00AM at the kiosk on Oak Ridge Club Road. Directions available at Birds & Butterflies.

Saturday, April 7 **Spring Bird Walk at Anderson Pond**

Join us for an early morning bird walk at the Anderson Pond site on Anderson Pond Road (approximately 2 miles off of Silver Bluff Road). Peter Stangel, with the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities will be our trip leader. Meet at Anderson Pond at 7:30AM. The walk will last 3-4 hours. Limited to 15 people.

- Space is limited, so reservations are required by calling 649-7999.

There is a \$5.00 non-refundable charge for each seminar or field trip when the reservation is made. Children 16 and under are free.

Seminars begin at **7:00PM at Birds & Butterflies, 117 Laurens St. NW in downtown Aiken** unless otherwise noted. Most seminars last 45-60 minutes.

If a particular seminar is full, additional sessions may be scheduled.

Unless otherwise noted, seminars are presented by **Ron Brenneman, Certified Wildlife Biologist and owner of Birds & Butterflies.**

Shop discounts & special door prizes and refreshments at each seminar at Birds & Butterflies.

**Ask
Your
Friends**



Wondering Birders Want To Know: Where Is That Bird Going With That Seed? Birdshare, in conjunction with Cornell Lab of Ornithology, offers an opinion:

You will often see birds flying from the feeder with food in its' beak. If it's Spring, the seed is likely going to the nest and nestlings. But what about in the Fall and Winter? The bird may be trying to stay safe, they may need more time to open the seed OR they are saving it to eat later! "Caching" is the unique behavior of storing the food for later...it makes sense to "squirrel" the food away instead of competing for a scarce or unreliable source. Not only is caching like a giant game of Concentration, the bird must make hundreds of trips a seed or two at a time and make sure there cache isn't stolen. Most important the bird must remember where all the food is hidden. Most common feeder birds can have anywhere from hundreds to thousands of caches in their home range! Fifteen bird families use various ways to cache food. Arthropods and mammals use the same caching techniques, which reminds me...I think I put some Oreo's in a cracker bin; for later, you know, when food is scarce, or I forgot to go to the grocery store!!!



Tried and True

I recently ran out of hot pepper seed to keep the pesky squirrels out of my feeders, but I noticed the flurry of ground feeders *under* the hot pepper suet holder...fast forward to the easy task of slicing a suet cake into crumbles, then sprinkling a handful on the ground, and in the feeders. Works like a charm; just remember to wash your hands well after handling the suet cakes!



Prep...



Crumble...



Chunks...

If you've got any tried and true tips, let me know at mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net

Photos by: Terry McGrath

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Strange sightings...

Although it might not feel like spring yet, snow geese are already making plans to migrate north in preparation for warmer weather. More than 600,000 thousand of them are making a pit stop at the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge of Harrison County, Iowa.



In December, 2017, 14 Snowy Owls were trapped at Boston's' Logan Airport and released along the shore of Duxbury Beach in Duxbury, Mass.



On March 13th our friends at the

Augusta-Aiken Audubon Society spotted this visitor—a lone male Mountain Bluebird! General opinion is he got blown off course by a storm. Not seen in the area since the 18th of March...safe travels, our friend!

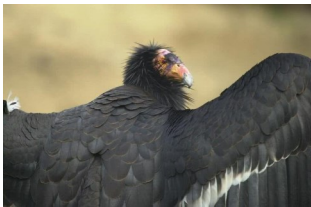


Mountain Bluebird

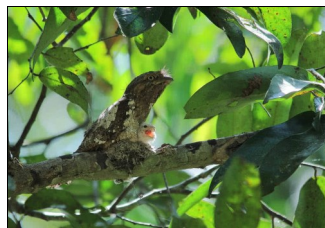
The Top 10 Most Strange Looking Birds in the World

10. California Condor-the brownish red eyes, featherless head and standing black feathers-weird
9. Sri Lanka Frogmouth-wide gaping mouth, large head and hooked bill-binocular vision with eyes facing forward
8. Long Wattled Umbrellabird-long wattle and large crest makes for a strange looking bird
7. Marabou Stork-bald pink head and neck, featherless inflatable wattle. This bird makes a vampire look handsome
6. Shoebill-prehistoric looking bird with a 9.5 " bill with sharp edges that crushes its' prey
5. Magnificent Frigate Bird-bright red throat patch in males attracts females in breeding season-I think I'm in love
4. Andean Cock of the Rock-the large disc like crest gives this bird a very strange look-national bird of Peru
3. Ribbon Tailed Astrapia-the tail of this male is 3' long, compared with a body height of 1'
2. King of Saxony Bird of Paradise-the elongated, scalloped ornamental feathers make a statement, for sure
1. Superb Bird of Paradise-renowned for its' bright ornamental plumage and unique mating dance, "smiling" with his back end at the girls wins the prize

10.



9.



8.



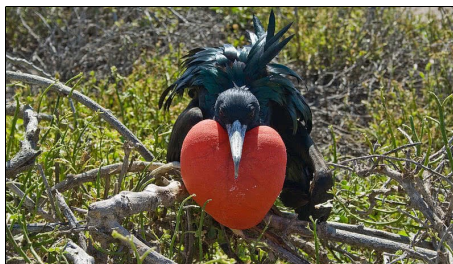
7.



6.



5.



4.



3.



2.



1.



Courtesy of:

<https://themysteriousworld.com/most-strange-birds-in-the-world/>

Like us on Facebook! For answers to your questions and membership information to the **South Carolina Bluebird Society** and the **North American Bluebird Society** go to:

<http://www.southcarolinabluebirds.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SouthCarolinaBluebirdSociety>



South Carolina Bluebird Society

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TO:

