



Nest Box News

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South Carolina Bluebird Society

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Trail committee member Glen Hendry has worked diligently this season to keep our stats up to date with new log sheets for the trail monitors and backyard birders. Working with a learning curve, it appears to be working well. Says Glen:

“Well folks, as the 2014 trail monitoring season winds down we can see what a *huge* impact our little club has had on the cavity nesting bird population. In this corner of South Carolina as of the end of July, we had reported over 1,300 new fledges from our trails and back yard boxes. This list includes the Bluebird, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-headed Nuthatch, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Wood Duck, Screech Owl, and our newest member of the club –the Great Crested Flycatcher!



This year we introduced a system whereby trail monitors could email their trail data to me during the season and I would keep up with the data entry in real time. This way we could get a month by month accounting of how many new birds we were putting in the air. To date, we have 100% of trails reporting! There have been many folks reporting their back yard data also. This is great participation for the first time using this system. Thanks to everybody!”

In order to see birds it is necessary to become a part of the silence.

Robert Lynd, Irish writer



Bluebird....

Titmouse....

Chickadee.....



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From The President... *Jim Burke*

Fellow Bluebirders,

This month marks the 4th anniversary of SCBS. Next year we are planning a one day 5th Anniversary Celebration during October. Maggi Howard, Steve Baker, Bill Calhoun and Susan Donohoe are the planning committee. As the planning progresses, the committee will be asking for volunteers to help with various tasks. So, stay tuned. Glen "The Geek" Hendry has done a fabulous job collecting and sorting our trail data this year. Our nestboxes fledged a total of 2,341 birds of which 1786 were bluebirds. Glen will make a detailed presentation of this data during our November 17th meeting. Nancy Moseley now has our Facebook page up to 162 members across South Carolina and a few other places. Terry McGrath's presentation at our meeting on September 22nd about her trip to Bermuda to "inspect" the state of the Eastern Bluebirds there was very interesting and informative. You don't want to miss our meeting on October 27th when Martin & Julie McCrum and Herb & Dee Fechter tell us about and show fantastic photos of their trip to Costa Rica this past May. Soon we will be organizing work parties to inspect and repair nestboxes on the trails. During that time we will also attach an aluminum tag to the boxes with the box number stamped on it. This will eliminate the effort every couple of years of having to repaint the numbers.

Happy Bluebirding.



If you know of a group, club or other organization that would like to learn more about bluebirds and/or to set up a trail, email Jim Burke, SCBS President.

PUT A PIN IN IT!

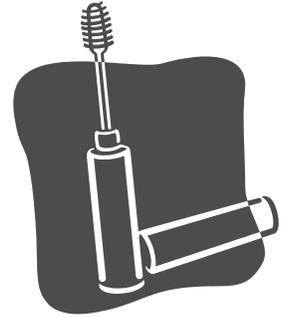
By Terry McGrath



Whether a hatchling, nestling, fledgling, or egg—we're happy you all are in our nest! **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO EVERYONE WHO HATCHED** in July, August, September and October!

Terry's Tips

Ladies, when you're done with your mascara, save the brush wand! After cleaning in warm, soapy water these brushes are great for cleaning the vent holes in your nest boxes. Let's just say a little "birdie" told me!



Deadlines for submissions to The Nest Box News are: **January 15th, April 15th, July 15th, October 15th** Send your ideas, pictures, comments or articles to: mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net



Donna Lee Houle of Gaffney, SC was the winner of the **Find Bluebert** contest last issue. He was hanging out with the little bird that had hatched on the front page, bottom left hand corner. Congratulations, Donna Lee!

You can email your guesses to :

Terry McGrath at mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net and the winner will receive their prize. Please include your mailing address, and good luck! You can't win if you don't guess! (In case of multiple guesses, the guess I receive with the earliest posted time will win).

Show your pride with an SCBS ball

Editors Note...

After I notified Donna Lee of her win, she said, and I quote: "OMG, you're kidding! Yahoooooo! Dad will love the ball cap!"



I couldn't have said it better—WAY TO GO!

From our Facebook friends

Mary Sabean Best way to attract all types of birds to your garden is to have a bird bath and water feature. It is a bird fest when I turn on the fountain. I have native plantings that give the birds food year round.



Save The Date

Member Meetings* 7:00 pm

October 27, 2014 "*Flora & Fauna of Costa Rica*" with Martin & Julie McCrum and Herb & Dee Fechter

November 17, 2014 *Trails Wrap up of 2014 and plans for 2015* with Ron Breneman & Glen Hendry

January 26, 2015

February 23, 2015

March 23, 2015

April 27, 2015

May-June 2015 (date to be determined)

SCBS Picnic

September 21, 2015

October, 2015 (date to be determined)

SCBS 5th Anniversary Celebration

November 16, 2015

Board Meetings* 6:30 pm

November 10, 2014

February 9, 2015

May 11, 2015

August 10, 2015

November 9, 2015

* at Birds & Butterflies

Birds & Butterflies

2014 Nature Series

Tuesday, Nov 4 *Images of Antarctica* (NEW)

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 8, 2014 *Eastern Bluebird Workshop, Pontiac Elementary School, Elgin, SC 10:00-11:30 a.m.*

April 18, 2015 *Aiken Earth Day, Newberry St., Aiken, SC 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.*

Laboring on Labor Day. Ron and Dori Breneman and Sharon and Jim Burke took two vehicles over to the Dennis Wildlife Management Area by Lake Moultrie to pick up 50 bluebird nest boxes, poles and baffles in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). The boxes are very high quality and in excellent condition. The nest boxes will be going into Hitchcock Woods. If you want a trail to monitor next season, let Jim Burke know at:

jimburke271@gmail.com

SCBS is in the beginning stages of working with MeadWestvaco Corporation (MWV) to establish bluebird trails on some of its properties. MWV is a leading global packaging and chemicals company with large tracks of forest lands in the U.S. and elsewhere. Portions of one of these tracks consisting of 78,600 acres near Summerville, SC are being developed into mixed use communities. MWV is committed to having 75% of this community land remain undeveloped except for nature related features and structures like hiking trails, wildlife viewing areas and bluebird trails.



Kites Delight!

By Peter Stangel, SCBS member and Senior Vice President, U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc.

High G turns, 90 degree rolls, dragonfly chases, and daring swoops were just a few of the maneuvers that captivated participants on the July 19 *Birds & Butterflies*-sponsored field trip to the Allendale Kite Fields. SCBS members Bill & Marty Foss, Chris & Sandy Randall, Ron & Dori Brenneman and Terry McGrath were privileged to be on the trip. During the course of this half-day trip, dozens of Swallow-tailed and a few Mississippi Kites put on an airshow that thrilled both novice and experienced birders. At times, the kites passed within a couple dozen yards of observers, providing close-up encounters that set off a flurry of picture-taking.

Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites gather at communal roosts prior to their migration to South America. The Allendale area is well-known as one such site. Hayfields here attract dragonflies and large beetles that the kites capture and consume in mid-air. Trip participants watched kites repeatedly capture dragonflies on the wing, then hold them in their talons while they reached down to ingest them.

The trip started at a site just south of Allendale. Concern about the overcast skies dampening kite activity disappeared quickly, as the birds were already active when we arrived at about 9:30. As the air warmed, insect activity increased, and so did kite numbers. The group watched about 25 Swallow-tail's and 6-7 Mississippi's for more than an hour. A large flock of White Ibis, Painted Buntings perched on overhead wires, and Eastern Bluebirds helped entertain the participants.

The group then headed to the huge hayfields just south of the Savannah River Site, at the intersection of Hwy. 125 and Millet Road. There were even more Swallow-tailed Kites here! As the group enjoyed the show, one observer noticed a Swallow-tail landing in a nearby pine. Closer examination revealed 23 Swallow-tails sitting almost shoulder to shoulder in the ice storm-damaged pine. Through the lens of a 32 power telescope, it seemed like the kites were sitting right next to us! We estimated about 50 Swallow-tails at this stop, with a half-dozen Mississippi's. We also enjoyed close-up views of several species of dragonflies perched on bard-wire fencing. The dragonflies looked nervous with all the nearby kite activity!

Field trip participants marveled at Ron's and Dori's ability to orchestrate moderately cool and overcast conditions for what is normally a scorcher of a trip!



Photo by Chris Randall



Photo by Terry McGrath

Kites, continued...



Photo by Chris Randall

Swallow-tailed Kites reach the northern extreme of their breeding range here in South Carolina and southern North Carolina. Mississippi Kites nest further north, with their range extending north along large river systems, well up into the mid-West. Although the exact purpose of these pre-migration roosts isn't known, it likely provides an opportunity for the birds to build fat reserves as they feast on abundant, protein-rich insects.

Mississippi Kites nest in Aiken and will remain in the area through August, but their numbers will diminish. I spotted three across the street from Aiken High School on August 3. Swallow-tailed Kites are less frequently seen, and are often closely associated with rivers such as the Savannah.

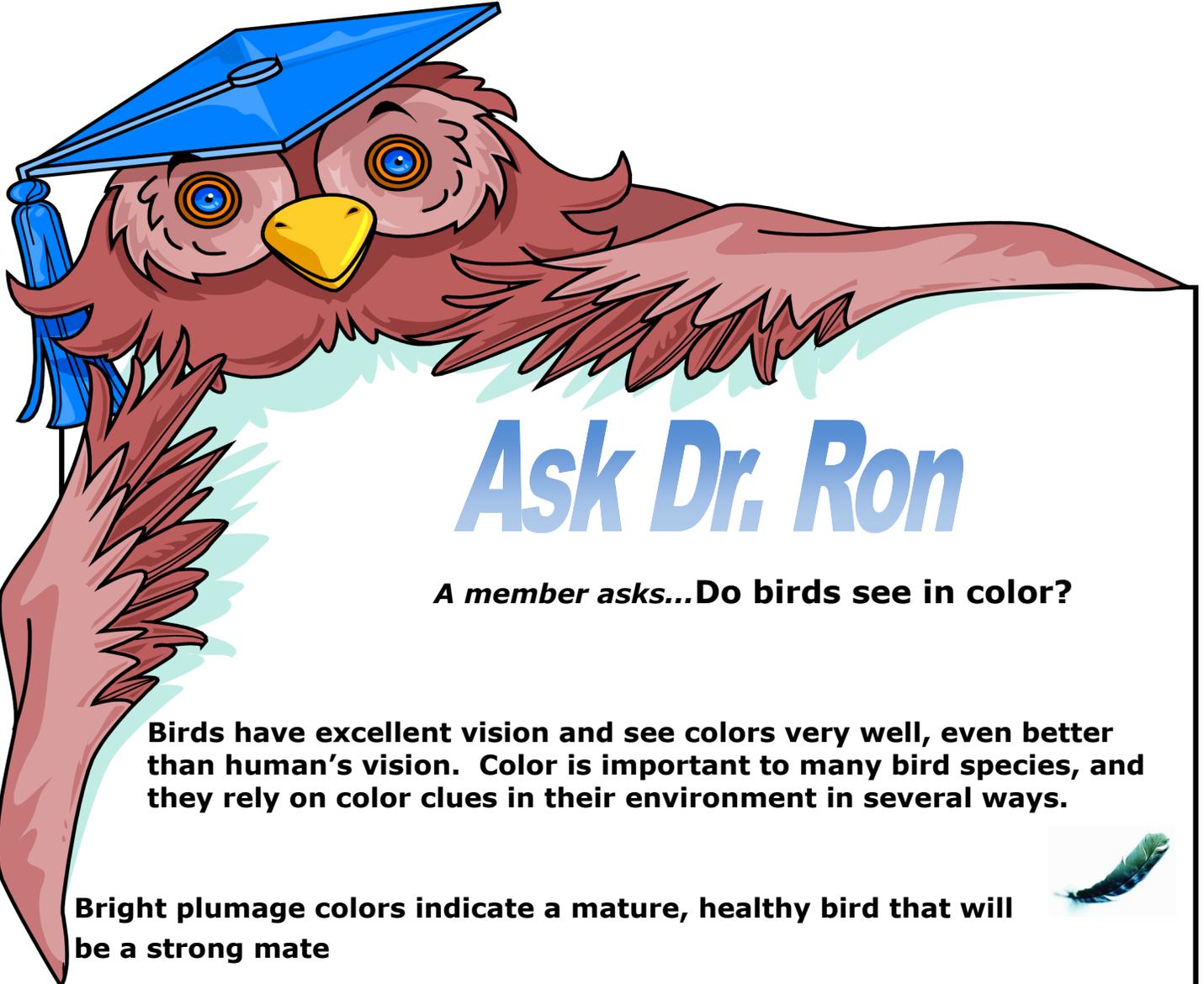
Watch for the 2015 version of the Birds & Butterflies trip to the Allendale Kite Fields—you won't be disappointed.



Photo by Chris Randall

Photos by Gene Howard





Ask Dr. Ron

A member asks... Do birds see in color?

Birds have excellent vision and see colors very well, even better than human's vision. Color is important to many bird species, and they rely on color clues in their environment in several ways.

Bright plumage colors indicate a mature, healthy bird that will be a strong mate



Brightly colored fruit is ripe and ready to eat at the peak of its nutritional value



Bright flowers are filled with nectar and attract insects for another food source



Because birds are so attuned to colors, adding the right colors to *your* backyard can be a creative and beautiful way to attract birds—particularly in late Fall and Winter when less natural color may be available.

The Numbers Are In and they are quite impressive! The **“All Bird Total”** was:

Bluebirds.....1,786

Brown-Headed Nuthatch.....68

Carolina Wren.....61

White-Headed Nuthatch.....17

Carolina Chickadee.....180

Wood Duck.....118

Tufted Titmouse.....100

Screech Owl.....6

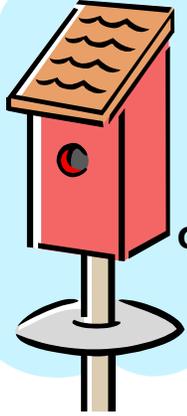
Great Crested Flycatcher....5

TOTAL: 2341

The numbers that aren't quite so happy are the percentage of *bluebird* only loss due to predators. The “unknown predator type” loss percentage was much lower than years past, and I think that is due to our trail monitors knowledge of what to look for in a nest box disturbance. If you include human intervention in the category, I personally can account for at least fifteen eggs that didn't make it (and should have)! Hopefully over the winter and before next season, we will be able to come up with a solution that can help lower the numbers of bluebirds lost on our trails. Remember, thanks to all our efforts, there are 1,786 bluebirds coloring our skies and that's a number we should all be proud of!



Photo by Terry McGrath



What's In Your Backyard?

...photos by our members for our members...

Glen Hendry shares these fabulous shots!



A baby Screech Owl



Bees and the sunflower



Great Crested Flycatcher



Brown-headed Nuthatch

...and from Florence, SC Ronnie Hucks shares these...



Barn Owl



Ural Owl at The Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw, SC



Owl in flight

Bald Eagle with prey



Red Tail Hawk

Across The Miles

The birds weren't the only ones flying this summer! Mary Ann and Roger Brock shared these photos of Western Bluebirds taken at a roadside parking lot in Yellowstone National Park. Love seeing them in the natural cavity of a tree!



Mama Bluebird feeds the young



Papa Bluebird does too...

Terry McGrath flew a little further to get her fix of bluebirds...to Bermuda!



This mama accepts an American handout!



Blue as far as the eye can see...

North and South

Meg Francoeur visited New York State and shares these pictures with us.



A toad...



A frog...



A chipmunk...

A red eft (the juvenile stage of an Eastern Newt)



North and South *Continues...*

Says Barbara Spence of her travels ...

"We went to a place on the Gulf coast called **Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary**. The sanctuary itself was interesting, but it led right out onto the beach at Indian Shores, FL. where *hundreds* of Black Skimmers were nesting in a protected area. I got several pictures, close up, of the skimmer chicks along with their parents. It was a sight to behold!! We also went to a place in Palm Harbor, FL. called **John Chestnut Park** and were walking on a boardwalk there. I looked up and there was a Swallowtail Kite right above us. It wasn't until I got the picture out of the camera did I realize I'd captured it eating "on the wing" as they are known to do."



Beachin"



"Mom, I'm bored!"



Nap time, little ones



Swallow-tailed Kite

Stranger Than Fiction

This story was shared to me by SCBS member Audrey Hendry (seriously folks, I *can't* make this stuff up!)

"Terry, know you will like this bird one too. We got this from one of our kids.

He has some of Don's carvings on a mantel and when they left their doors open, a REAL bird flew in and decided to visit with the carvings. Our son had a long handled net for the hot tub so caught the real one and put him/her back outside. Great story, with pictures to prove it huh?"

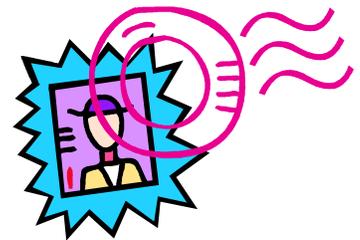


By the way, if any of you have seen Don's wood carvings *or* are lucky enough to own one, this story Audrey shared makes a little more sense. His work is so life-like! Stop by Birds & Butterflies in downtown Aiken to see more of Don's work.

Frequently animals, flowers, trees, ships, railways, buildings, children and cherubs decorate stamps, flags and currency of countries around the world. Try your luck at matching these birds to their prospective country!

1. India
2. New Zealand
3. Hungary
4. Zambia
5. Fiji
6. Antarctica
7. Venezuela
8. Belgium
9. Malaysia
10. U.S.A.
11. Jamaica
12. Estonia
13. Bermuda
14. Seychelles

- A. Bald Eagle
- B. Penguin
- C. Barn Swallow
- D. Bird of Paradise
- E. Eastern Bluebird
- F. Rhinoceros Hornbill
- G. Red Footed Booby
- H. Dolphin
- I. Peacock
- J. Kaka Bird
- K. Black Cheek Lovebird
- L. Kiwi
- M. Kestrel
- N. Dove



ANSWERS:

1.I, 2.L, 3.N, 4.K, 5.J, 6.B, 7.H, 8.M, 9.F, 10.A, 11.D, 12.C, 13.E, 14.G

"Snag House" Proves Successful

By Mike DeBruhl

The February ice storm, Pax, experienced in Aiken and surrounding counties proved to be quite devastating to trees, bushes and some structures. But some good did emerge from the storm remnants! There were several dead limbs in the wooded area behind our house, including a couple of dead tree "snags" that had been riddled with holes by woodpeckers. I found one that had four holes where the industrious woodpeckers had hit knots and were unable to complete the cavity. After determining how I might turn it into a nesting area for our cavity dwelling feathered friends,



I then cut out a three foot section of the snag that had the four holes.

Determining which hole could best be used as the new entrance, I

"notched" out the back of the snag in order to attach a nest box. With reverse engineering, a standard bluebird nest box was modified so that the entrance hole was cut in the *back* of the box and aligned with the top of the woodpecker hole. I made the outside hole a bit larger to avoid the birds having to make a "tight" turn to get into the box.



Photo by: Jenny Hendershot

Did you see the new house in Mike's yard? I can *totally* see my family there next Spring! Wonder how the schools are....

I then made a groove in the back of the snag to make a snug fit for the support pole. I placed the baffle on the pole and then secured it to the snag with two "U" clamps.



Then I installed the pole and Snag House in my side yard with plenty of space for the birds to exit and fly to the surrounding wooded areas.

I am pleased to say that the next morning a pair of Nuthatches moved in and later fledged four! A pair of bluebirds moved in next and also fledged four....SUCCESS! I now look forward to the 2015 season to see who the Snag House *snags* as the

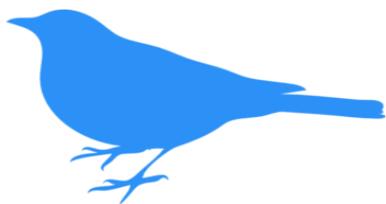
...as the saying goes, "Build it and they will come!" I'm sure Mike will be glad to share his snag plans with you, so if you have a opportunity to turn Mother Nature's trash into treasure, just ask Mike!



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>



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