



# Nest Box News

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



South Carolina Bluebird Society

Volume 5, Issue 3

*An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society*

Fall 2016

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**It seems our statistician, *Glen Hendry*, said it best..."It has been a banner year!"**

**Thanks to all trail monitors and backyard birders, from the 100+ nest boxes in Hitchcock Woods to the single nest box at Citizen's Park, the numbers are in and they are FANTASTIC!! Despite the unrelenting temperatures the birds (and SCBS) posted some really impressive stats!**

**With the 2016 season under our belt, we can now start thinking about the repair and winterizing of the nest boxes on our trails. More information will follow with a guideline of the dates for preparing the trails for the 2017 season.**

**Thanks again for a job well done, and check out pages 5 and 6 for the status reports...**

*Terry McGrath*



***My favorite weather is bird-chirping weather...***

***Loire Hartwoud***



**Please remember that nature is not cruel. Being cruel implies intent to harm someone or something just to do harm. Nature is unforgiving, harsh, and often random. But it's not cruel ...**





Our 2016 season reports are almost completed, thanks to our "Data Guru", *Glen Hendry*. He diligently enters, analyzes, and provides the results of the reports from our trail monitors –no small task as the job has increased as we expand. **Thanks, Glen for a truly great job!!** At the October meeting, we provided data that included a detailed analysis of the **3769** total birds fledged so far (Trails & Home Boxes) which includes **3028** Bluebirds, **289** Carolina Chickadees and **178** Wood Ducks and **278** other cavity dwellers. In all, a great year and we can all take pride in our efforts! I will be sending the various reports to you that include data by individual Trail, our "backyard birder" stats, average clutch size for nest boxes on our trails, and percentage of white eggs this season. I'm sure you will enjoy the information. We held a successful annual "Sidewalk Sale" on October 15 in front of Birds & Butterflies. Folks kindly donated 77+ used (previously eaten from) feeders and other bird and backyard items. We took in over \$300 for the SCBS. Many thanks to those who donated and to the volunteers who helped clean, display and sell the items. Now we are in the midst of our planning for the **2017** season which will be here before we know it! This includes *plans for several new trails*. For instance, we have preliminary OKs for new trails at the *SC Gopher Tortoise Preserve in Windsor* (1300 acres of habitat), and on both the *Reserve Club Nicklaus Course* and the *Hollow Creek Course*. These will be great additions to our trail system and are ideal habitats. We will be seeking volunteers to help install the poles, baffles and nest boxes. This is an enjoyable effort and we look forward to getting these trails up and "nesting". Our plans also call for reaching across the state and establishing "**Coordinators**" for **SCBS** groups outside our current areas. We would like to get them established to be contributing units to the **SCBS** and we will provide membership enrollment, initial and refresher training, certification of trails, assistance in setting up and training monitors, and collecting data from each. If you know of anyone across the Palmetto State that would be interested in establishing a **SCBS "Outpost"**, please contact either Ron Brenneman, Glen Hendry or myself.

The Bluebirds are still around checking out houses to "roost in" with their buddies as it gets cooler (Thank Goodness!)...so keep those feeders full! Cheers....and see you on the Trails ! *Mike*

## SCBS DIRECTORY

**Director Emeritus: Jim Burke**

**President:** Mike DeBruhl/cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net

**Vice President:** Maggi Howard/mhoward@golf lady.us

**Secretary:** Debbie Reed/reeddebbie@bfusa.com

**Treasurer:** Tim Bendle/tim.bendle@gmail.com

**Directors :** Steve Baker/sjbaker614@aol.com

Terry McGrath/mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net

**Bluebird Trail Committee :** Ron Brenneman/birdbflies@aol.com

Roger Brock/rwbrock@mac.com

**Editors Note:** We have two (2) positions open on the Board of Directors for a three (3) year term. Interested persons please contact: **Mike DeBruhl/cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net** for more information.

Board  
of  
Directors



# Save The Date

Member Meetings\* 7:00 pm

September 19, 2016

October 17, 2016

November 14, 2016

Board Meetings\* 5:00 pm

August 8, 2016

November 7, 2016

TRAIL MONITOR TRAINING SESSION

January or February, 2017 TBA

# Presentations

**Oct. 15, 2016** Bird Feeder Sidewalk Sale at *Birds & Butterflies*

**Oct. 25, 2016** Friends of Aiken Garden Club

**Nov. 14** North Augusta Council of Garden Clubs

## PLANNED PRESENTATIONS – 2017

**Feb. 7, 2017** Masters Garden Club, Orangeburg, SC

**Mar 7, 2017** Cherokee Rose Garden, Augusta, GA

**Mar 9** Hilton Head Island Audubon Society, HHI, SC

**Mar 14, 2017** Pine Needle Garden Club, Augusta, GA

**April 9, 2017** Harbor Heights Garden Club, Ninety Six, SC



**The Bird Feeder/Sidewalk Sale** October 15 was a huge success! Many of you donated your surplus/used feeders and “garden art” (flags, statuary, etc.) to the SCBS. Special thanks to Ron & Dori Brenneman for letting us sell them in front of *Birds & Butterflies*! We had almost 80 items and raised \$308.00! All monies will go to the South Carolina Bluebird Society to support our efforts in the conservation of cavity nesting birds!



# Insider News...

By: Terry McGrath

*Happy Birthday!*

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



SCBS now offers **Lifetime Memberships**. If you'd like to subscribe, email Mary Shultz, Membership Director for info at:

[shultzim@att.net](mailto:shultzim@att.net)



## ***Did you know...***

Here's a fun quiz to take from the website posted below...

Go to :

<https://www.boombox.com/quiz/240244/what-birds-are-you-like>



***Our thoughts and prayers go to our friends and members who were negatively impacted by Hurricane Matthew...***

For information on joining NABS, see <http://nabluebirdsociety.org/>. For information on joining the SCBS and other great information, see <http://www.southcarolinabluebirds.org>



**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](mailto:mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net)



## **A Neat Way to Donate to SCBS**

When shopping at Amazon.com, you can now list the SCBS as a charitable beneficiary by choosing their Amazon Smiles program.

When you shop, designate SCBS as one of the non-profits you support and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to SCBS! That's one penny for every \$2.00 spent! Hey, it all adds up!!

### **Your unique charity link**

This link will take people directly to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) in support of your organization so they won't have to search for your charity among almost a million other organizations. Use this link in all your AmazonSmile marketing promotions. It's the easiest way for customers to find and support your charity.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/45-2984342>



*Blue skies smiling' at me, nothing but blue skies do I see...Willie Nelson*

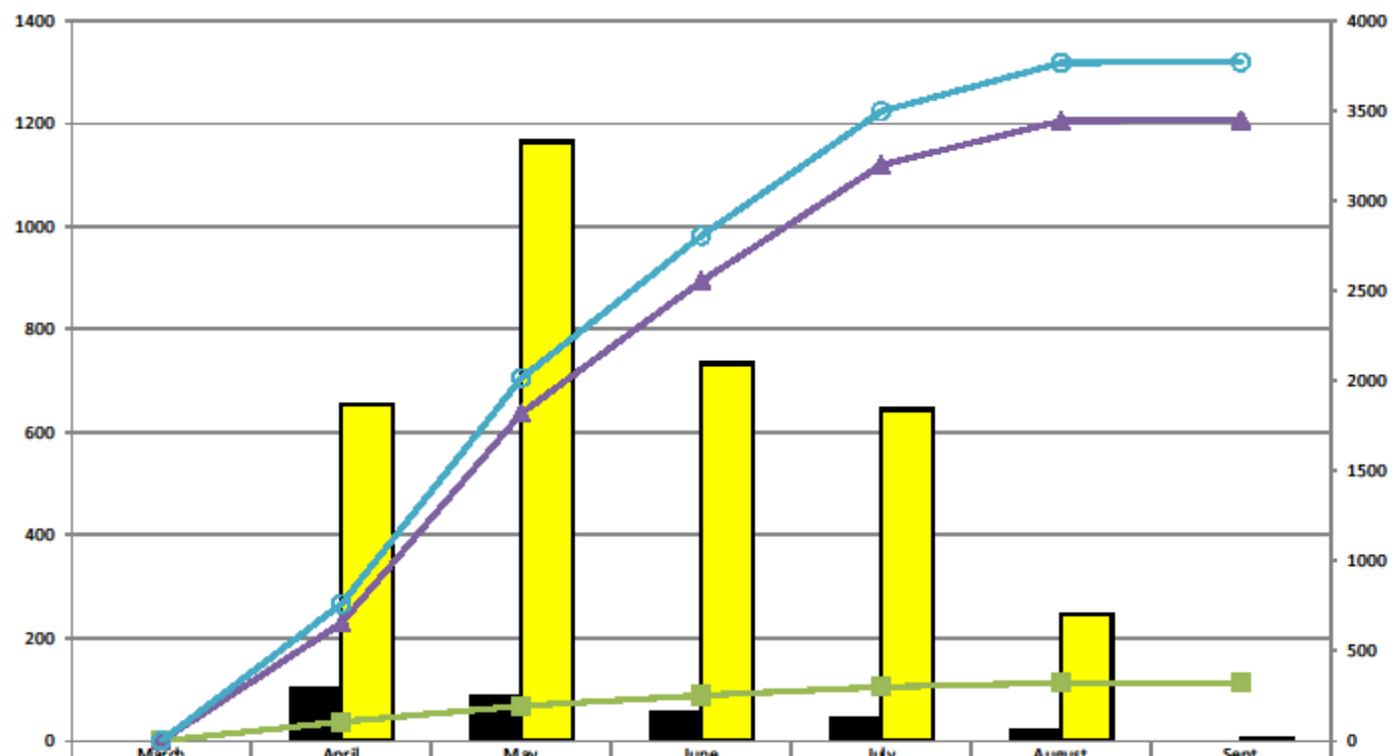
South Carolina Bluebird Society Fledge Report for All Trails																
BackYard_Trail	(All)															
Sum of Fledged_Count	umn Labels															
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Grand Total
Bluebird	22	66	105	61	147	164	196	222	204	588	917	1,617	1,805	2,239	2,329	10,682
Brown-Headed Nuthatch						19	11			13	51	45	68	102	77	386
Carolina Chickadee		16	14	14	17	26	53	26	11	95	87	157	190	264	210	1,180
Carolina Wren		4	4	7	5				4	12		30	61	36	31	194
Fly Catcher													5	14	10	29
Screech Owl												4	6	3	2	15
Tufted Titmouse	4	4	13	5		4		23	4	19	64	93	100	61	95	489
White-Breasted Nuthatch					4							5	17	2	23	51
Wood Duck											19	66	118	132	145	480
NA																
Grand Total	26	90	136	87	173	213	260	271	223	727	1,138	2,017	2,370	2,853	2,922	13,506

Trail by trail statistics were sent to everyone via an email from Glen Hendry on September 5, 2016. For space issues, I have included a summary of the *bird species* numbers only. An update came from Mike DeBruhl on October 20, 2016 with even bigger numbers! (See the numbers in the **President's Perspective...**)

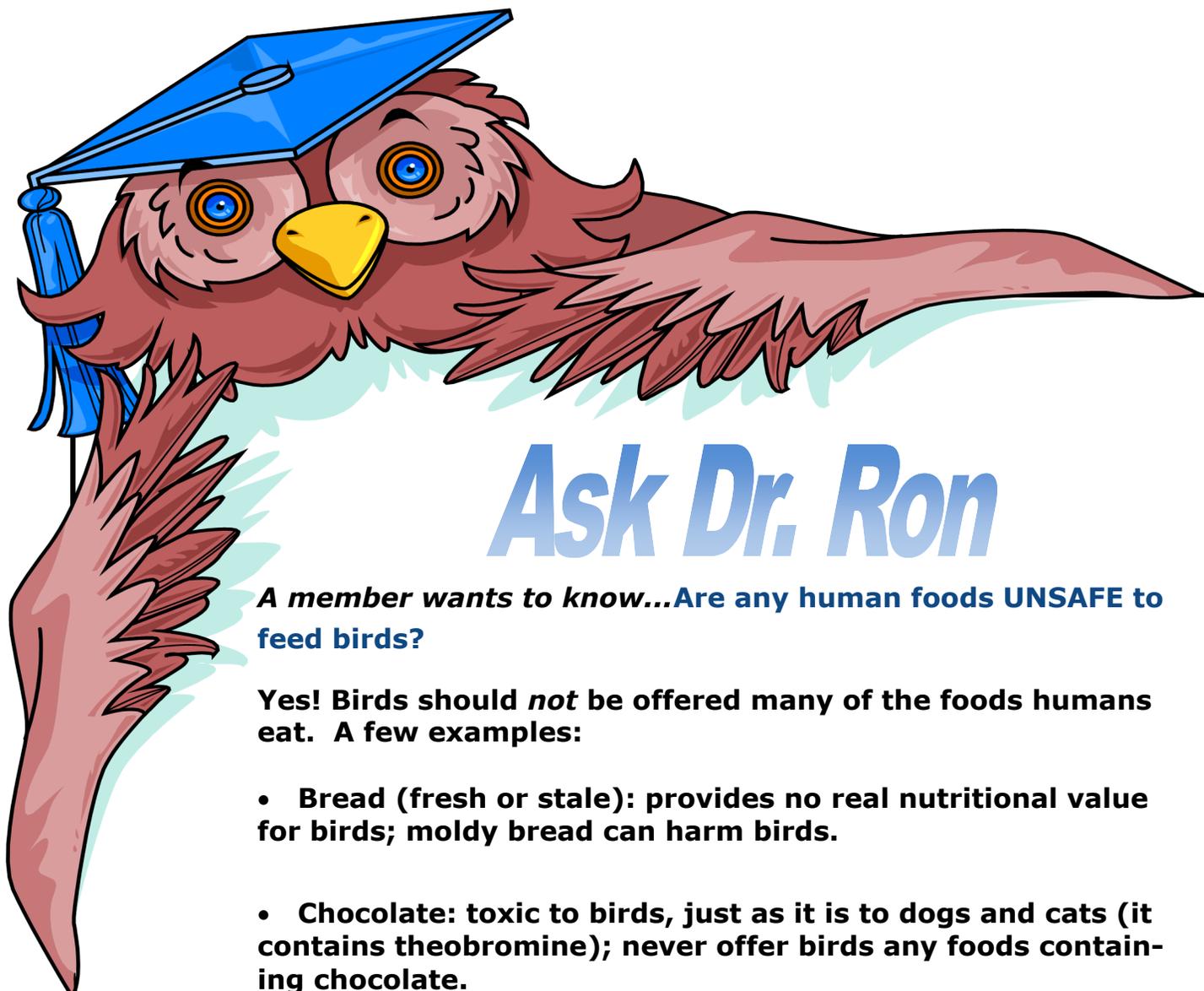
I'm sure you all will agree they are quite impressive!



### SCBS Fledge Counts by Month - 2016



	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
BKYRD MO	0	106	88	58	47	23	
Trail MO	0	654	1,165	733	645	246	4
CUM BKYRD	0	106	194	252	299	322	322
CUM TRL	0	654	1,819	2,552	3,197	3,443	3,447
CUM TOTAL	0	760	2,013	2,804	3,496	3,765	3,769



## Ask Dr. Ron

**A member wants to know...Are any human foods UNSAFE to feed birds?**

**Yes! Birds should *not* be offered many of the foods humans eat. A few examples:**

- **Bread (fresh or stale):** provides no real nutritional value for birds; moldy bread can harm birds.
- **Chocolate:** toxic to birds, just as it is to dogs and cats (it contains theobromine); never offer birds any foods containing chocolate.

**Table scraps:** some may not be safe or healthy for birds; most table scraps will attract mice or rats.



## **Much "Adoo" About Poop**

Except for the curses it provokes when it falls on your just-washed car, most folks have not give this subject much thought. It happens, right? Evacuation, elimination, defecation; they are the scientific and agreeably the polite terms for what we all usually call pooping. In the bird world, the product of this act is commonly referred to as *bird poop*, even by degreed ornithologists. With all the nesting birds around, one naturally wonders what happens to the baby birds' poop? Things must get pretty challenging in avian housekeeping! How do the birds handle this challenge? It depends on the bird. Unlike mammals which have separate processes for dealing with solid waste and liquid waste, birds combine the two processes (kind of like a buy one, get one free!) Conservation of water is critical to a bird's survival. By binding the metabolic waste in uric acid rather than dissolving it in water, it can dispose of it without the loss of valuable fluids. Back in the nest, the nestlings are ravenous and the parents are working hard to keep them fed. What goes in must soon come out! The droppings of many baby birds are enclosed in a tough membrane called a fecal sac. Nestlings usually produce one sac after each feeding. Parents remove these little sacs in their beaks away from the nest site as to not attract, by scent, the fact that they have nestlings. This goes on for approximately the first seven days of the nestlings' life. By handling the housekeeping in this way, keeping the nest area clean is important for the safety and health of the nestlings.



Photos by *Kathy Q Rich*



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## **Top 5 Things You Can Do At Home for Birds in the Winter**



**This fall or next spring, plant native conifers and flowering plants that provide shelter and/or a food source**



**Forget fall garden cleanup! Leave your native flowers in the garden without deadheading or pulling them up**



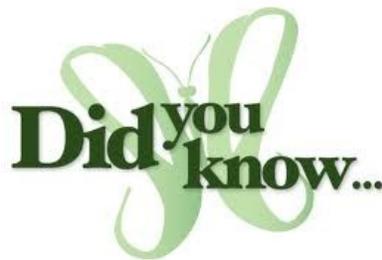
**Dead snag trees should be left standing to provide shelter for birds, but only if they are not a direct threat to people or property**



**Keep nest boxes up year round. Some birds may use them to stay warm**



**If you have feeders and bird baths, keep them full and clean**



Critters ranging from **turtles and toads** to **birds, mammals** and **invertebrates** rely on leaf litter for food, shelter and nesting material. Many moth and butterfly caterpillars overwinter in fallen leaves before emerging in spring.\*

**\*National Wildlife Federation**



## Birds & Butterflies of Aiken - 2016 Nature Series Schedule

*"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."*

Saturday, October 1

### Boyd Pond County Park Fall Migrants Field Trip

More than 100 bird species have been reported at this Aiken County Park that includes a large pond, a boardwalk across a woodland swamp, and forests that are good for warbler, finches, and many other fall migrants. We will hike about 3 miles over easy terrain and spend some quiet time on the boardwalk just watching as the birds go by. The trip will last 2-3 hours. Meet at 8:00AM at Boyd Pond Park. Directions available at Birds & Butterflies. Limited to 15 people.

Tuesday, October 4

### Images of Africa

Travel to Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa through the camera lens of Aiken's Forrest Roberts. You will enjoy these amazing pictures and dialogue. Pictures include elephant, lion, leopard, rhino, buffalo, wildebeest, zebra and beautiful birds.

Saturday, October 8

### Hitchcock Woods Field Trip

Dr. Harry Shealy, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Hitchcock Woods Foundation and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Biology at USCA and Dr. Walt Kubilius, Environmental Geologist at Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, will lead a tour of Hitchcock Woods. Learn about the history and geology of Hitchcock Woods and become familiar with this Aiken gem. Great for those new to the Aiken area and those who have lived here for a while. Meet at the Tea Cottage Gate off of Dibble Road at 9:00AM. Wear comfortable walking clothes. Relatively easy walking. Limited to 25 participants. Rain date Saturday, October 15.

- 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.



**More info and a complete Nature Series schedule for 2016 will be available at *Birds & Butterflies* or by visiting their website at: [www.birdsandbutterfliesaiken.com](http://www.birdsandbutterfliesaiken.com)**





**Glen Hendry found this "runt egg" in one of his nests.**

In October, Dorothy Reeves in Erath County, TX discovered two unusual eggs in one nest box while cleaning. (The egg at the top left is a normal bluebird egg, added for comparative purposes.) Obviously neither hatched. The long egg probably has a double yolk. The small egg was probably laid either right before or after the double-yolker, and probably lacks a yolk. Neither egg was cracked open, so you can't be sure. Keith Kridler of the TX Bluebird Society had never heard of anyone finding both a dwarf and double-yolked egg in the same nest box.

- **Dwarf egg:** often lack a yolk, in which case they would not hatch. They may be more spherical than a normal egg, and have a thick, rough shell.
- **"Runt" egg:** Noticeably smaller than the smallest extreme expected by normal variation within a clutch. May be different in shape (e.g., more narrow.) A common egg abnormality in domestic fowl, perhaps more common with young birds, not necessarily the first or last egg, may be due to a temporary disturbance in the reproductive system. (Mulvihill)
- **Double-yolked:** happens when two yolks are released at the same time, or when one yolk is lost in the body cavity for a day and is picked up by the funnel when the next day's yolk is released. Heredity may be a factor, or it may occur more in young hens just starting to lay.
- **Yolkless:** formed around a bit of tissue sloughed off the ovary or oviduct. The tissue stimulates the secreting glands of the oviduct and the yolkless egg results.



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(c) LgPacker, Abnormal Eastern Bluebird Eggs from Erath County, Oct 2008

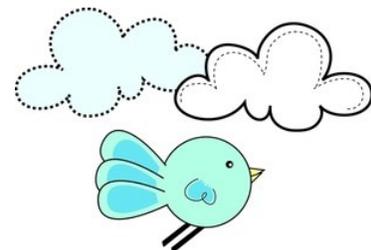




## ***In the Olympic Spirit, Don't Play Chicken With A Bluebird!***

Now that the Olympic Games are over, I am realizing the parallels between the athletic feats of the participants and those of a trail monitor. For those of us who are trail monitors, we are familiar with the inherent “dangers” of the job. We know of the chance encounters with flying squirrels, wasps, fire ants and snakes. But all in all, it's a pretty safe activity. In my four years of being a trailmonitor with the South Carolina Bluebird Society, I have also had the pleasure of doing the release of a Common Loon, a Red-tailed Hawk and the re-nesting of two Great Horned Owlets. With each situation, I am warned not to get too close to the beaks/talons of these awesome birds. But just like a kid whose parents say “don't go there”, I kind of think it would be cool if I *did* manage a small nip or scratch...I could say “Oh this, this was from a Great Horned Owl I re-nested! So it is with some amusement that when I check my nest box the mama Bluebird likes to dive bomb me, clicking her beak in warning as she flies towards me. A few weeks ago the 3rd brood is about to fledge and as I'm approaching the box, I hear mom and her warning clicks. Let the games begin! Five feet from the box I spy her on a branch. I'm thinking it would be equally cool to be pecked by a Bluebird, and probably less painful! Our eyes lock and with the grace and strength of an Olympic springboard diver, she dips and dives directly toward me! I stand my ground until I chicken out, and as I duck down I trip on a tree root and land smack dab on the lawn edging, resulting in a 2 inch scratch on my arm! Mom scores a perfect 10; I'm just hoping no one was watching! So the next time we meet, remind me to show you the neat scar I got while breaking up a fight between a Loon, a Hawk and two fluffy Great Horned Owls!

Terry McGrath



# Backyard & Beyond... *Photos by our readers for our readers...*

**Glen & Gail Hendry** captured this momma Killdeer protecting her brood at Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone Park. How many babies can you count?



**Terry McGrath** snapped this Hooded Crow at the Pantheon in Rome, Italy.



**Nancy Moseley** caught this hummer resting in her backyard. The white edges of the tail says this bird is a juvenile and most likely a male!

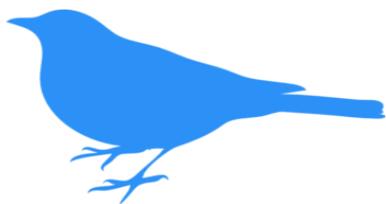


This gorgeous hummingbird photo is courtesy of **Ronnie Hucks**.

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:**