



# Nest Box News

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



South Carolina Bluebird Society

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## SCBS Member Comes Up With a New Nest Box Post Design

Predator problems on some of our trails with unconventional nest box placements inspired Glen Hendry, member of the Trail Committee, to think "outside the box" over the winter. Baffles and netting would not work on boxes around our trails at most horse farms because the horse like to rub on the boxes and the height of the poles would have to be upwards of 10+ feet for the snake netting to be effective. Enter Glen, our own "McGyver" of the bird world! His design includes two sections of PVC pipe of different widths, peg holes at 3 foot lengths for a peg style stop and...VOILA! An adjustable pole that "lowers" for the monitor who can then "raise" it to its' new height. Stable-in-the-Woods and Winthrop Field are the test trails for these new poles. We will be keeping in touch with monitor Susan Terry as the season begins. If this design works, trail monitors should be able to successfully thwart the predators that continue to plague the cavity nesting birds we are trying to protect. When you see Glen, make sure and ask him all about it!



**By Terry McGrath**

Susan Terry, trail monitor and Glen Hendry with the new pole design.

**The stork is voiceless because there is really nothing to say...**

**Will Cuppy**

## From The President... *Jim Burke*



Fellow Bluebirders,

The 2014 nesting season is finally getting off of the ground or better yet into the nestbox. The cold weather has definitely delayed things a bit. So far we have only had a few reports of damage to the boxes from the ice storm.

**SCBS has hit the jackpot!** The front cover of the March-April issue of *South Carolina Wildlife* published by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources has a full page photo of a male bluebird feeding an insect to a young bird inside a nestbox. The magazine has an 8 page article about SCBS with beautiful photos including a full page photo by our own Maggi Howard. I have received phone calls and emails from people all over the state resulting in new members and invitations. The York County Soil and Conservation District is interested in establishing a sub-group of SCBS and bluebird trails. I have been invited to speak on April 8<sup>th</sup> at Duke Power Company's Super Tuesday Program in Salem, SC. The volunteer coordinator for the Botany Bay Wildlife Management Area on Edisto Island has joined SCBS and invited SCBS members to come over for a tour of their bluebird trail and other parts of Botany Bay. Sounds to me like another field trip might be in order!

Sharon and I have been to the Charleston area three times since the beginning of 2014. One was to conduct trail monitor trailing for the Seabrook Island Natural History Group. The other two were bluebird presentations at the Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Stores in Charleston and Mt Pleasant. Both of these resulted in corporate and individual memberships in NABS and SCBS.

Many, many years ago I had a football coach who divided the human race into two species: Athletes and Athletic Supporters. Don't get me wrong, supporters are very important to any organization and SCBS has wonderful supporters. But, SCBS is getting to the point where we need a few more folks to come out of the bleachers, strap on a helmet, step onto the playing field and take on committee leadership or committee membership positions.

Here are some items to think about and how you can get involved as SCBS continues to grow. Please let me know if you would like to chair one of these committees or be a member.

1. Picnic Committee: May, June or October would be a good time to have a picnic at Bridgestone, Boyd Pond Park, Herb 'N Berries, etc. Sharon has kept good records of the "stuff" that was used at two previous SCBS picnics.
2. Anniversary Committee: October 2015 will be SCBS's 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Maybe we should plan a one day or day and a half conference/celebration. It would be much easier than the NABS conference.
3. SCBS Annual Awards Committee: It would be nice to establish some annual awards for our members and others such as Bluebirder of the Year, Trail Monitor of the Year, Teacher of the Year, Land Owner of the Year, etc.
4. Nominating Committee: Board of Directors. We need to add a few more members to the board.
5. Scholarship Committee: Annual Scholarship to a high school senior that is interested in the environment, ecology or wildlife.
6. Your suggestions are welcomed for other types of things SCBS should be focusing on.

Happy nesting season,

Jim



Feathers & Fluff  
From  
Terry



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 January, February and March!**

Happy Second Year Anniversary for *The Nest Box News*! Thank you for all your support and contributions. I'm excited for the next year and look forward to sharing with everyone the great efforts the South Carolina Bluebird Society continues to make towards the conservation of cavity nesting birds everywhere! Blessed blues to you all... **XOXO**



Roger Brock had knee replacement surgery in late January. He is doing well and says "Thanks a bunch" for the gardenia plant sent to him on behalf of the SCBS.

**PASS IT ON!**

Note to backyard birders: clean out your nest boxes *now!* If any nesting material looks new, leave it because the birds have started nest building. If you want data sheets to keep track of who's who in your yard, you can pick them up at Birds & Butterflies, or download them at [www.southcarolinabluebirds.org](http://www.southcarolinabluebirds.org)

**Earth Day at Hopelands Gardens on April 25, 2014 has been CANCELLED due to Ice Storm Pax. Take note if you signed up to volunteer...**

**FYI-the birds' claws and beak are made of *keratin*, like our fingernails, and are impervious to the ice and cold (although gripping is another matter)!**

Bluebert was found in our December issue by *Donna Lee Houle*, author of [The Eastern Bluebird \(A Guide for Young Birdwatchers\)](#) and SCBS member who lives in Gaffney, SC. He was hiding among the Christmas toys on the front page next to the dove. *Donna Lee* donated her winnings to SCBS, and Bluebert has headed for warmer climes after a chilly winter. Look for him in the Summer 2014 issue of *The Nest Box*



Cathy Kavartek will be bringing the treats for the January, February March and April SCBS meetings.  
Thanks,  
Cathy...



**If you know of a group or organization that would like more info on the SCBS, you can contact Jim Burke, President.**



## Christmas Eve Bird Count –*The most fun I’ve ever had at 5 in the morning in the cold!*



A holiday tradition known as the Christmas “Side Hunt” was popular prior to the turn of the century. People would choose sides and go afield with their guns, and whoever brought in the biggest pile of feather (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. On Christmas Day in 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a “Christmas Bird Census”—that would *count* birds in the holidays rather than *hunt* them. So began the Christmas Bird Count. On that day, Frank M. Chapman and twenty-seven dedicated birders held twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near northeastern North America. Those 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied around 90 species on all the counts combined.

The 114<sup>th</sup> Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count took place Dec 14, 2013 to January 5, 2014. The longest running Citizen Science survey in the world, Christmas Bird Count provides critical data on population trends. Tens of thousands of participants know that it is also a lot of fun. Data from the over 2,300 circles are entered after the count and become available to query under the Data & Research link at <http://bird.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.

With a knowledgeable birder and friend, Charlie Campbell, we stalked the lakes and trails in Woodside and The Reserve for their contribution to this year’s Christmas Eve count. Our list reads like a “Who’s Who” of celebrities! You want bluebirds? We got ‘em! Sparrows? Take your pick! The count yielded 37 different species of birds. Our mission included four hours of walk time and two hours of drive time for a total of 26 miles. (This total included Charlie “prowling for owls” at sunrise! ) I was pretty good at spotting the birds, and Charlie’s experience in sound and sight identification helped our total equal or better some of the 14 other birders in the 15 mile radius that made up this year’s count area. While the hermit thrush eluded us *this* count, we will be back on the hunt again in May for the Audubon’s Summer Migratory Bird count! So, if you notice two shadowy figures with binoculars and field scopes scanning the tree lines in the early morning hours, ask me how you can join in!

Photos on page 5

**By: Terry McGrath**



**Christmas Eve Bird Count photos...courtesy of Terry McGrath**



Chipping Sparrow



Northern mockingbird looks on from a bush



A Great Blue Heron fishing at the lake



The silhouette of a red tail hawk



Three bluebirds "on a wire"



A possible homesite-Mrs. Bluebird likes the privacy

# Save The Date

## Member Meetings\* 7:00 pm

**March 24, 2014** James Knight, author of The Venomous Snakes & Their Mimics of Panama & Costa Rica

**April 28, 2014** Topic to be determined

**May 24 or 31, 2014** Picnic?

## Board Meetings\* 6:00 pm

**May 12, 2014**

**August 11, 2014**

**November 10, 2014**

## Events

**May 3, 2014** Master Gardeners Assoc. Education Day

**June 13-15, 2014** NABS 2014, Boise, Idaho

## Schedule of Bluebird Presentations to Outside Organizations

April 1, 3:30 pm, Barnwell Garden Club, Barnwell, SC

April 8, 10:00 am, Duke Power Co., Salem, SC

April 22, Hillside Garden Club, Augusta, GA

Sept. 11, 1:00 pm Jensen's Community Garden Club, Murrells Inlet, SC



*A list of all lectures in the series are available at Birds & Butterflies or go to:*

*[www.birdsandbutterfliesaiken.com](http://www.birdsandbutterfliesaiken.com). Lots of new and exciting topics this year, so sign up soon! Best \$5.00 you'll spend this year! See you there...*

## Birds & Butterflies 2014 Nature Series

**Tuesday, March 18** "Hummingbirds-Nature's Jewels"

**Tuesday, April 8 (NEW)** "Heritage Preserves-Some of SC Best Natural and Cultural Treasures"

**Saturday, April 12 (NEW)** Bird Walk in Hitchcock Woods (field trip) Rain date April 19

**Tuesday, May 6 (NEW)** "The Fall Line"

**Tuesday, May 20** Critters of the Night (field trip) Rain date May 22

**Tuesday, June 3** "Owls of SC" Including Live Owls

**Tuesday, July 8** "Identifying Hawks and Owls of Our Area"

**Tuesday, August 12 (NEW)** "Tagging Turtles for Jesus"

**Tuesday, Sept. 9** "Snakes of the SE": How Do You Know Who is Who?

**Tuesday, Oct. 7** "Armadillos in S.C." History & Biology

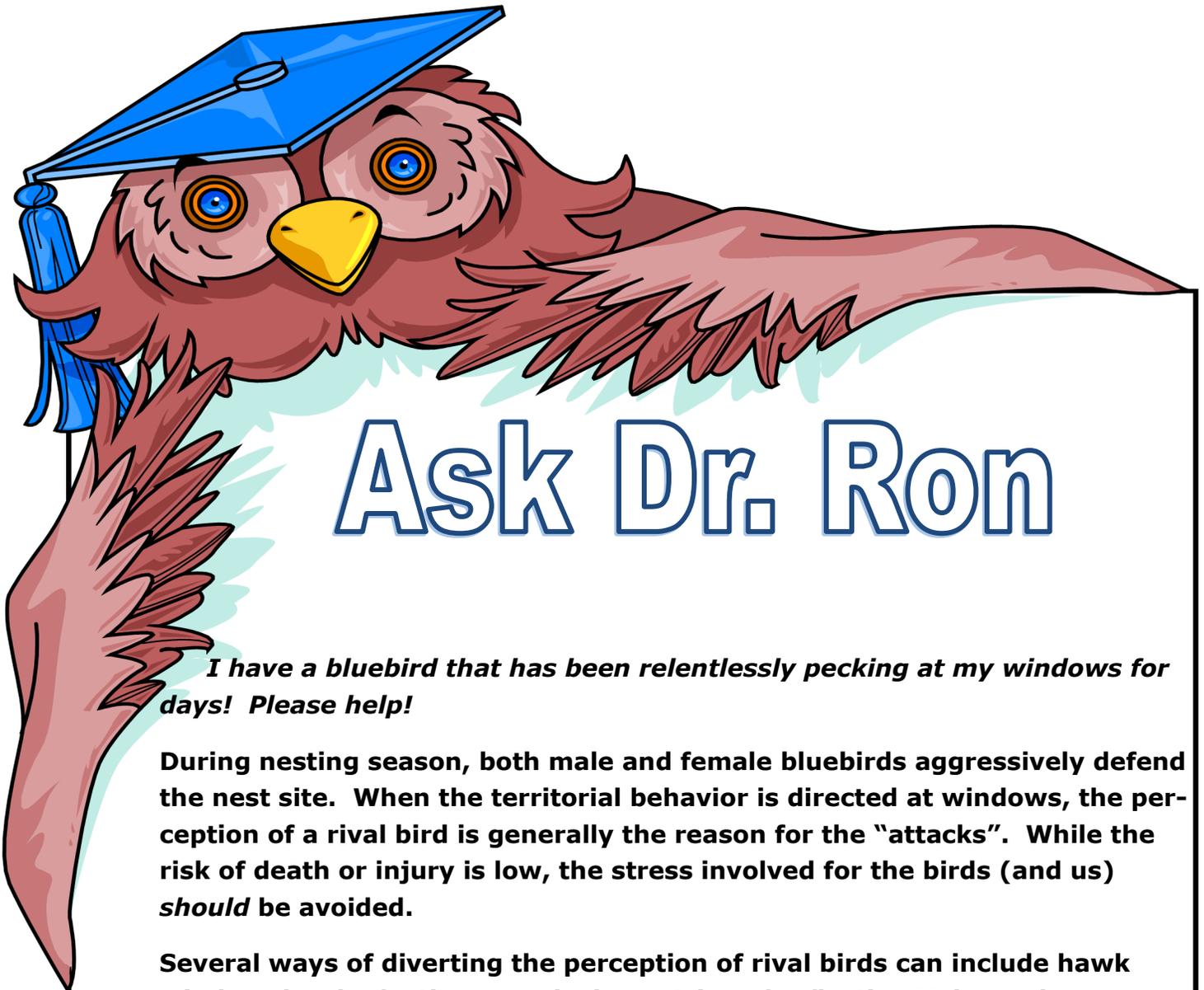
**Saturday, Oct. 11** "Hitchcock Woods field trip"

**Tuesday, Nov. 11 (NEW)** "Images of Antarctica"

## Upcoming Trips

**May 3-10, 2014** Costa Rica Birding Trip (12 of 16 spaces filled)





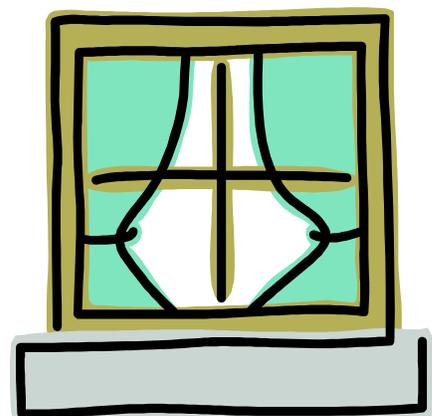
# Ask Dr. Ron

*I have a bluebird that has been relentlessly pecking at my windows for days! Please help!*

**During nesting season, both male and female bluebirds aggressively defend the nest site. When the territorial behavior is directed at windows, the perception of a rival bird is generally the reason for the "attacks". While the risk of death or injury is low, the stress involved for the birds (and us) *should* be avoided.**

**Several ways of diverting the perception of rival birds can include hawk window decals, feather guards, long strips of reflective Mylar and even "fake" snakes. Some people have found netting and cds hung from suction cups with fishing line an effective way of breaking up the windows' reflection.**

**This behavior *may* continue throughout the breeding season.**



As Ice Storm Pax turned our State into a winter wonderland, the resiliency of our feathered friends was evident in these photos taken by our members and Facebook Friends...

# What's In Your Backyard?



Photo by: **Barbara Ray Spence**



Photo by: **Deb Calhoun**



Photo by: **Shirley Ann Lepianka Myers**



Photo by: **Nancy Moseley**



Photo by: **Cheryl Crawford**



Photo by: **Kyle Muza**



Photo by: **Leigh Ayers**



Photos by:  
**Don Crutchfield**



Photo by: **Jason Weathers**

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Photo by: **Kyle Muza**



Photos by: **Leslee Knight**



Photo by: **Julie Bennett Weathers**

# Winthrop Polo Field Bluebird Trail

By Jim Burke

Friday afternoon, February 7<sup>th</sup> was a sunny, blue sky day in Aiken when a new partnership was formed between the Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC) and the South Carolina Bluebird Society (SCBS). What could be better, two organizations interested in preserving land and wildlife. While enjoying the sun and camaraderie, Katie Roth, Executive Director of ALC and seven members of SCBS installed eight bluebird nest boxes around the Winthrop Polo Field. Three of these nest boxes are mounted on tall telescoping poles attached to the backs of fence posts to protect them from being damaged by mowing. This setup is a new "invention" by Glen Hendry, an SCBS member, to keep the nest boxes safe and to not create a safety hazard for maintenance personnel or horses. The first installation of these poles was at Stable on the Woods. Only time will tell if the bluebirds will take to them. As we circled the field placing the nest boxes, an SCBS member related to Katie that sometimes when we place nest boxes, bluebirds often show up within in a few minutes to check them out for a future nesting site. Katie was polite, but skeptical maybe thinking she was just being told a tall tale. But sure enough, as we returned to the starting point a bluebird was perched on top of the first box we had placed not 45 minutes earlier. ALC member Tony Spence will monitor the Winthrop trail weekly from March –August.



**Front:** Terry McGrath, Gail Hendry Marty Foss

**Back:** Jim Burke, Glen Hendry, Ron Brenneman,  
Bill Foss

**Ron & Glen put the finishing touches on  
Glen's new telescopic nest box while Terry  
"supervises"!**



**Mr. Bluebird approves of the new addition!**



# SCBS Adds Lovely Trail on Southside

## Old Dogwood Trail



Just this past Christmas Ron Brenneman got a call from Debbie Snyder, *left*, asking him to visit her property on Chukker Creek Road and see if it was possible to have any bluebird boxes. Ron, myself and Bill and Marty Foss went to visit her home; a beautiful horse property on 5 acres. After touring her property, where we met 2 of her 3 horses and her two yellow labs, Brie and Hank, we gave her the good news. She had room for *at least* eight nest boxes! We needed to talk with Glen and Gail Hendry about tweaking (not twerking) the nest box design to allow for an extra 15 inches of back panel to mount the boxes a little higher (guarding against curious horses). Once those boxes were ready, Glen and Gail joined the original group along with Jim Lefebvere, and on 1-12-14 we mounted the nest boxes on prime bluebird real estate. A dogwood tree\* about one hundred years old gave Debbie the idea for Old Dogwood Trail as the trail name.



We look forward to a long and productive nesting season this year and for many years to come! Thanks, Debbie!

*By: Terry McGrath*



Debbie stands with Brie, Hank and Glen at the last box



Ron Brenneman, *r.* and Glen Hendry, *l.* put the final touches on box #3



Hank and Brie will be waiting for the bluebirds

*\* Editors note: as of press time, the dogwood tree suffered significant damage from the ice storm, Pax. Hopefully the tree can be saved...*



# Tales From The Trails



Linda Burgess and Marty Foss are trail monitors for the Hitchcock Woods Trail this season. An e-mail from Marty shared an interesting *tale from their trail* this past March 8, 2014. Linda arrived at the entrance to the Woods off South Boundary Rd. and spotted what she thought was a “beehive” in a tree behind the office. Out came the binoculars, and lo and behold, it was a pair of barred owls! After one of the owls in a neighboring tree was pestered by some blue jays, he/she landed as photographed by Marty Foss in this picture.

A perfect example of the owls ability to blend in to their surroundings, it’s no wonder Linda’s “beehive” turned into Marty’s photographic opportunity for these two trail monitors! Marty goes on to explain that “after two and one half hours on the trail, one of the owls was still perched in the tree.”

On a side note, there was no damage to any of the nest boxes, and bluebirds were sighted scouting out the real estate! Good job, ladies!



The South Carolina Bluebird Society has placed eight nest boxes around Winthrop Field.

By the time this edition “flies” to your in-box, (or mailbox), all our trails will have been repaired, winterized and cleaned up for the birds. Thanks to everyone who helped with this process!

While Ice Storm Pax did considerable damage to our area, the majority of our trails were spared from serious damage and are awaiting the next generation of “*blues*”!

# More...

## Tales From The Trails



The three wood duck nest boxes on The Equine Rescue Center trail have eggs! Mama wood duck is already incubating thirteen eggs in the new box that was installed about three weeks ago, and the other two nests have six eggs each!



The wood duck nest box on Spaulding Lake has 14 eggs being incubated as of March 13th. The female did not leave the box when Jim approached until he opened the door and then experienced a rare treat of "duck-in-the-face" as the female departed! She only flew a short distance before landing on the lake and keeping an eye on the two legged "predator". This box produced 11 ducks in 2012 and 10 in 2013.

The wood duck box at Carolina Bay took a direct hit from a large pine tree that snapped off and came to rest on top of the box. The box was not damaged, but the tree is beyond the capability any of us amateurs trying to move it! This will a project for the City as they continue to clear the area.



On a recent morning Mike and Laurel Collver observed a pair of wood ducks land in their backyard on Oakman Lake. While foraging for acorns, the female noticed the bluebird house. She flew up and landed on top of it and stuck her head into the entry hole to investigate a possible nesting site. Determining she needed a bigger home, she flew down and resumed her breakfast of acorns. Mike called Jim Burke and now there is new real estate lakeside in the hopes that this pair (or another pair) will take up residence.

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***Santee Coastal Reserve Field Trip*** did not disappoint the 17 people who braved the dawn and a cozy van, for the 2.5 hour trip to the Reserve with a side tour to The Center for Birds of Prey and an early dinner at the Sea Wee restaurant. After an informational slide show with Jim Lee, the Education Coordinator on the history of the Reserve, and Mary-Catherine Martin, Wildlife Biologist, on the cavity nesting birds the Reserve supports, we took off for a mini-exploration to the Washo Reserve where a dozen cormorants treated us to many photographic opportunities. We then headed to an area that is Eldorado, a plantation home built in 1797. Destroyed by a fire in 1897, the ruins have left their footprints to a bygone era. Three hours is way too little time to spend here, but the call of the wild beckoned. The next few hours found us up close and personal with eagles, falcons, owls and turkey vultures, just to name a few. We enjoyed a flight show, a mix of bird trivia and ecological insights into where we all are headed. As Jim Elliott, founder of The Center in 1991 said, "If we're the ones causing the problem, then we're the ones who ought to mitigate it."



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<http://www.southcarolinabluebirds.org>

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



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