



# Nest Box News

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



South Carolina Bluebird Society

Volume 6, Issue 1

*An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society*

Spring 2017

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**Despite the inconclusive findings of several groundhogs around the country (longer Winter, earlier Spring), one fact is certain—nesting season is upon us! Several reports of territorial activity, complete nests and even eggs are more the norm now. This activity is about a week to ten days earlier than last season, but our trail monitors are up to task! Our trails have been prepped for the season—cleaned, repaired and blessed for a bountiful bevy of Bluebirds (and other birds also)! From the Kids' Nest Box Build to the fabulous photos of all things Nature in our Backyard & Beyond pages, you'll agree that we (and the birds) are ready to go!**

**Check out [pages 4 & 5](#) for more volunteer opportunities, and thank you all for making SCBS the great group it is!**

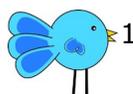
**Terry McGrath**

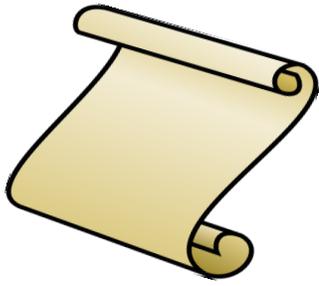


*I think that, if required on pain of death to name instantly the most perfect thing in the universe, I should risk my fate on a bird's egg." –Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1862*



Photo by Terry McGrath





## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE... MIKE DeBRUHL

### Bluebirds = Love, Hope and Happiness

As documented in writings from Colonial Times, our beautiful Eastern Bluebird was then often referred to as a “**Blue Robin**”, since it reminded early settlers of the friendly European Robins they left behind. Later, author and naturalist, **Henry David Thoreau (On Walden Pond)** expressed his fondness of our blue friends when he waxed poetically that the “**The Bluebird carries the sky on his back**”. Since then the Bluebird has become a symbol of **Love, Hope and Happiness** that endures to this day, especially to those of us who love and nurture and work to preserve our “Blues”.

Therefore, it is not surprising that over the years, the Bluebird has been more frequently mentioned than any other bird in American poetry and in our popular songs. These beautiful little birds have certainly captured the hearts of many and we are very fortunate that our Blues remain with us year round here in South Carolina.

With our 2017 BB nesting and fledging season FINALLY getting back to a semblance of “normal”.... we are once again observing the various activities and behavioral characteristics that we have come to love and admire. These include how they “love” and protect the nests and family, mutual support in feeding and caring for the young - even after fledging - and their uplifting and cheerful song, signaling the start of each new day. Plus, we cherish the smiles they bring to us, our children, and grandchildren as we share them and our observations with family, friends and neighbors. So who among us can deny that they truly do represent **LOVE, HOPE and HAPPINESS** to us; one of the special reasons that we belong to the **SCBS !!**

Our educational information-filled presentations continue to be successful and in demand across the state. If you would like to help deliver these programs, please let me know. Some travel required, but always lots of fun as we educate folks on the cavity dwellers in their backyards and communities and help establish new trails.

Let's stay diligent on our trails and keep that data up to date. Only by the diligent efforts of our Trail Monitors and members can we continue to provide the in-depth information on our activities and the results of our conservation efforts.

So, until next time (please note that our next member meeting is **APRIL 25**).....

**SEE YOU ON THE TRAILS..... Mike**



# Save The Date

## Member Meetings\* 7:00 pm

January 23, 2017

February 27, 2017

March 27, 2017

April 25, 2017

SCBS Picnic May 13, 2017

May 22, 2017

June / July / August -SUMMER  
BREAK— No Meetings

September 25, 2017

October 23, 2017

November 13, 2017

December 2017— No Meeting



## PLANNED PRESENTATIONS – 2017

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

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

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

**March 14** Pine Needle Garden Club, Augusta, GA

**April 11** Harbor Heights Garden Club, Ninety Six,  
SC

**April 22** Earth Day, Aiken, SC

**May 19-20** Aiken Council Garden clubs Tour &  
Show

### Board of Directors Meetings\* 5:00pm

February 13, 2017

May 8, 2017

August 14, 2017

November 14, 2017



\* all meetings at Birds & Butterflies

## SCBS DIRECTORY

**Director Emeritus:** Jim Burke

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

**Vice President:** Maggi Howard/mhoward@golflady.us

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

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

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

Mike DeBruhl/cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net

Terry McGrath/mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net

Kitty Yundt/kitty.yundt@outlook.com

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

Roger Brock/rwbrock@mac.com

Glen Hendry/gwhendry@hotmail.com



### Membership

Mary Shultz/shultzim@att.net

### Website

www.southcarolinabluebirds.org

### Webmaster

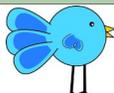
Karen Raine/caveguru@yahoo.com

### Facebook Page Editor

Nancy Moseley/fmoseley@bellsouth.net

### SCBS Newsletter Editor

Terry McGrath/mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net



# Insider News...

By: Terry McGrath



...Goldfinches are among the strictest vegetarians in the bird world, selecting an entirely vegetable diet and only inadvertently swallowing an occasional insect!



\*Cornell Lab of Ornithology

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)



**A little birdy told me...**

**SCBS trail monitors have been overheard discussing their excitement about the upcoming season! Want in on the action? Contact any member of the Trail Committee for more info...**



Bird Count		
	Sparrows	Robins
Friday		
Thursday		
Wednesday		
Tuesday		
Monday		

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

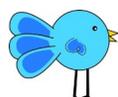
This link will take people directly to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) in support of your organization so they won't have to search for your charity among almost a million other organizations. Use this link in all your AmazonSmile marketing promotions. It's the easiest way for customers to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

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





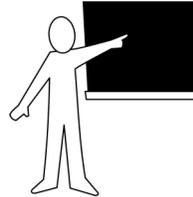
**Speaking of our volunteers, SCBS trail monitor and Board member Kitty Yundt came up with the great idea of setting up a table at the Farmers Market in downtown Aiken the second Saturday of each month! Two to three volunteers would be needed to man the table in shifts from 8am-10am and 10am to noon. Volunteers should be prepared to answer questions, pass out information sheets, application forms and collect money from the sale of merchandise. Shoot Kitty an email at: [kitty.yundt@outlook.com](mailto:kitty.yundt@outlook.com) if you would like to help!**



## *A Picture Worth A Thousand Words*

Let's just say our volunteers who helped with the Kids' Nest Box Build are still grinning--here's why...





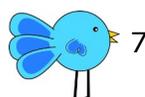
*After our chapter President, Mike DeBruhl made a presentation to the Masters Garden Club in Orangeburg, SC, Barbara Beach wrote this article for the club:*

**I have seen bluebirds checking out my boxes ever since December. Are they ready to nest?**

**It is almost that time of year for bluebirds to start scouting for suitable nesting sites. Male bluebirds locate a nesting site and establish their territory as early as the end of February and as late as July. The bluebirds using your box during December were trying to keep warm against the cold weather and many times they will have a slumber party with more than one in the box.**

**For our readers that would like to provide a home to the beautiful bluebird, let's start with some basics. Birdhouses are readily available but not all are suitable to be a bluebird house. Purchase or build a nest box designed specifically for bluebirds. If you feel the need to paint your bluebird house, use only light colors and paint only the outside of the birdhouse. For best results and the most protection from predators, boxes should be mounted on poles with a baffle. A metal mounting post need not be elaborate or expensive. Smooth, round 1" electrical conduit is inexpensive and works well; although any smooth scrap round pipe will work. The nest box should be mounted on the pole so the entrance hole is at eye level off the ground. This provides a good height to deter predators and allows you easy monitoring. Be sure to install a predator baffle on the post about 2 inches below the nest box to prevent critters reaching the box.**

**Location, location, location. We know location is often the selling point for our perfect home and the same is true for bluebirds. Bluebirds prefer to nest in an area that includes open space, scattered trees and low ground cover. The nest box should face an open space with a 50 – 75 foot straightaway with suitable landing for fledglings within 50 feet. If you plan to install multiple houses make sure the nest box openings do not face each other (no direct line of sight) and place approximately 60-75 feet apart. Bluebird boxes should be placed out of reach of sprinkler systems. The nest box should not be placed on or so close to trees or fences that would afford easy access for predators. Keep boxes at least 200 yards from barnyards and feed lots where House Sparrows are abundant. House sparrows are the main source of competition for bluebirds. House sparrows will nest anywhere and will often drive away adult bluebirds, leaving bluebird nestlings to starve to death. Worse, they will peck unhatched bluebird eggs and kill the babies, or even kill adults they happen to find sitting on the nest.**



*Continued...*

Nest boxes should be monitored at least once a week to observe bird development and check for undesirable competitors, ants, wasps, and any parasites. Once the hatchlings are 10-12 days old, extra care should be used in opening a nest box ( place your hand gently over the door opening ) as this could cause them to fledge too early. Bluebirds will not reuse a nest; therefore, the nest box should be cleaned out after each batch of babies has fledged. To control mites and other parasites dust the inside of the box with diatomaceous earth. Bluebirds in South Carolina will typically produce two to three broods of three to six young between March and August. Fun fact – 5% of bluebird eggs can be white.

**For more information visit the SC Bluebird Society's website:**  
[www.southcarolinabluebirds.org](http://www.southcarolinabluebirds.org)

Thanks, Barbara! Glad y'all had a great time!



*If you know of any group who would like a presentation, you can contact Mike DeBruhl at: [cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net](mailto:cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net)*





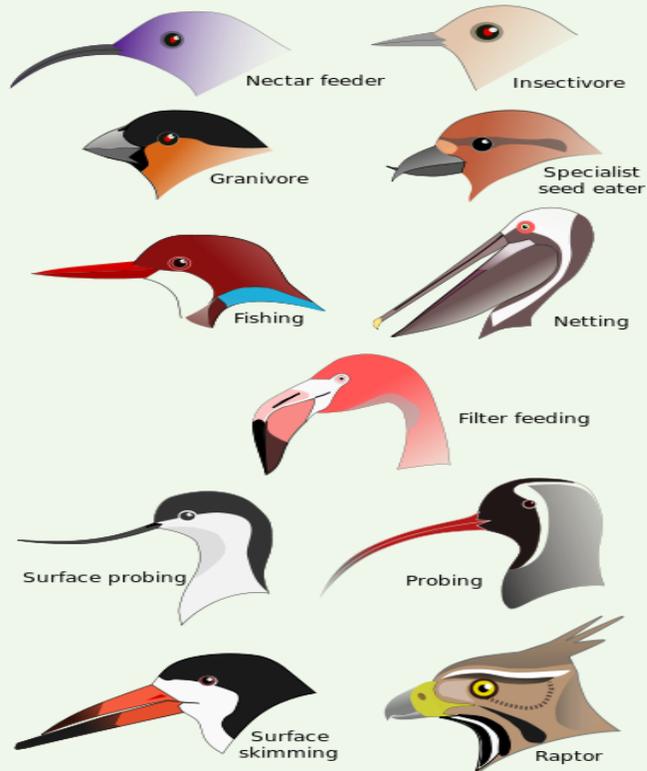
# Ask Dr. Ron

**A MEMBER ASKS...**

## **WHAT ARE BIRD BEAKS MADE OF?\***

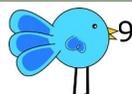
Your fingernails and bird bills have something in common: They both consist of a protein called keratin. The keratin layer over beak bone gives bills their glossy appearance. As the keratin wears down with use, a new layer forms, so the beak stays sharp and sleek.

**I didn't know that!**



**\*courtesy of Birds and Blooms**

*Not to scale*



## **Birds & Butterflies of Aiken - 2017 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, April 8 (NEW)**

Spring Bird Walk at Stable View Farm

Join us for an early morning bird walk at Stable View Farm, a world class equestrian facility on 1,000 acres, 5 minutes from exit 18 off of I-20. Peter Stangel, with the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities will be our trip leader. The walk will last about 3-4 hours. Directions are available at Birds & Butterflies. Limited to 15 people. We will meet at Birds & Butterflies at

**Tuesday, April 11**

Hummingbirds – Nature's Jewels

Learn interesting facts about the smallest bird in North America. We will discuss feeders, food, feeder maintenance and plants that will attract hummingbirds to your yard.

**Tuesday, May 2**

Wildflowers of South Carolina and Surrounding Areas

South Carolina and neighboring states are home to many species of beautiful wildflowers and shrubs, including orchids, carnivorous plants, azaleas, etc. We will learn interesting facts about many of the

**Tuesday, June 6 (NEW)**

Rescuing Injured Raptors and Songbirds

Presented by biologists Larry and Carol Eldridge, who have been wildlife rehabilitators for more than 30 years, focusing on raptors for the last 20 years. This presentation will provide a general description and what to do if an injured raptor or songbird is found, how to approach it, how to capture it, house it, and what NOT to do. Raptor identification will also be discussed.

**Tuesday, May 16 (NEW)**

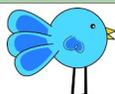
Hitchcock Woods Archaeology Study

A survey of Hitchcock Woods was conducted over a period of three field seasons to inventory the archaeological resources in the Woods. They identified a variety of archaeological sites including a liquor still, numerous old house sites, prehistoric sites and old brickyard, alkaline glazed pottery production site, and a segment of the old Charleston & Hamburg Railroad. This interesting program will be presented by Bobby G. Southerlin, who is with the Ar-

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## Birds & Butterflies of Aiken - 2017 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."*

*Continued...*

**Tuesday, July 11 (NEW)**

**Reflections of the Southern Appalachian Mountains**

**Explore the beauty and majesty of the wildlife, plants and scenery of the Southern Appalachian Mountains of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia.**

**Saturday, July 22**

**Field Trip to the Allendale Kite Fields**

**Join us as Peter Stangel, with the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, leads us on a 1/2 day field trip looking for Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites near Allendale, SC. If we are lucky, we will have the opportunity to see several to dozens or more of each species at fairly close range as they feed on dragonflies and other insects. Limited to 15 people. This trip fills up quickly so make reservations as soon as possible. Trip details available at Birds & Butterflies.**



**I love watching these humans on our field trips!**



**I know right? They're so interesting!**

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.

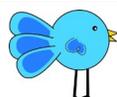
Children 16 and under are free.

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

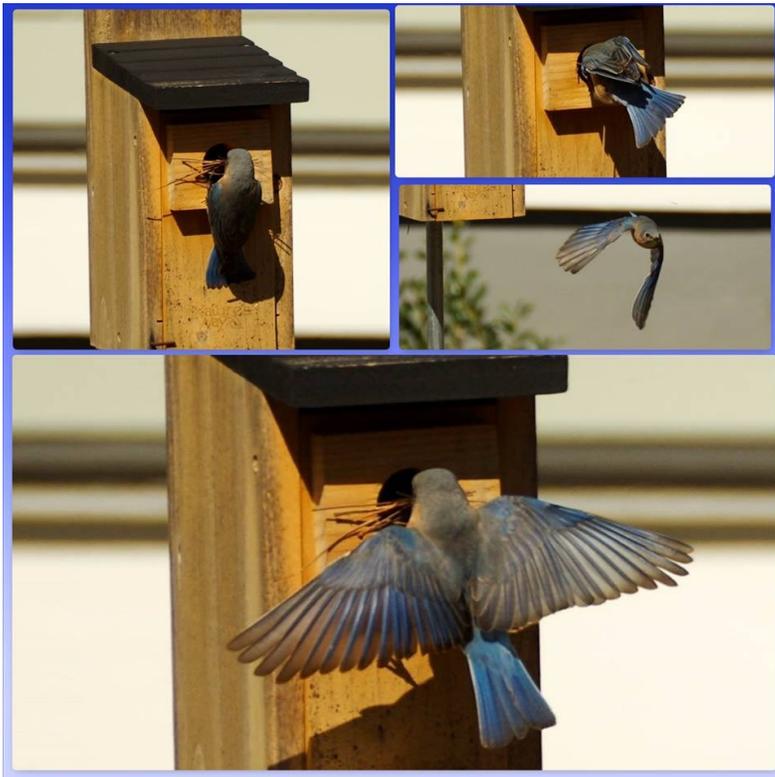
If a particular seminar is full, additional sessions may be scheduled.

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.



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



**Shelly Palomaki** of Mt. Pleasant, SC caught this hard-working female building her nest...and the results!



**"Yes, this is a low-fat worm! Whyever do you ask?"** **Nancy Moseley's** bluebirds have some self-esteem issues at her Aiken, SC backyard!



**Marcie McGehee Daniels** "Mr. Blue" had a red carpet moment at her Summerville, SC home!



***A sneaky bunch we are sometimes...***



***Tom Bradner's "Moultrie Cam" caught this scene—raccoons to the right, possums to the left!***



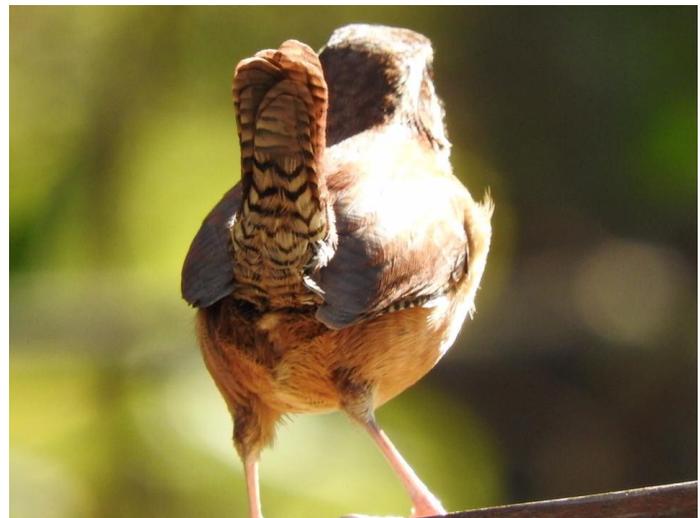
***And everyone took retreat when this fellow stopped by for a snack!***



Don't worry, *Elizabeth Ann Bradley* in Mt. Pleasant, SC promises the birds are free to go at anytime!



*Susan Thielemann Freschi* in Aiken, SC only has one question for this squirrel in her screech owl box...WHY??!!

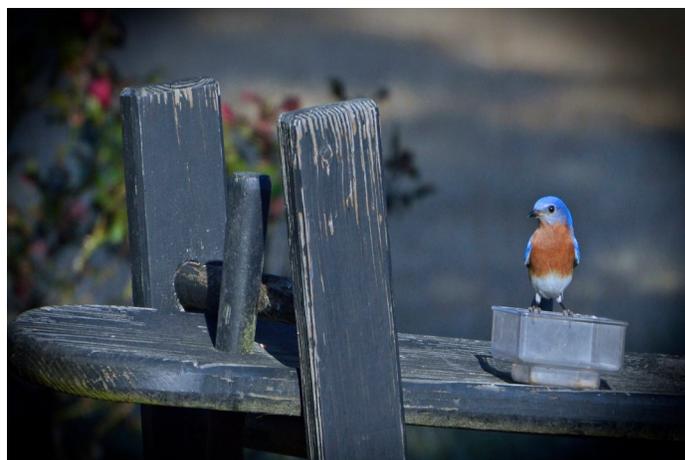


*Debbie B. Fernandez* in Aiken, SC shares this little Carolina Wren...

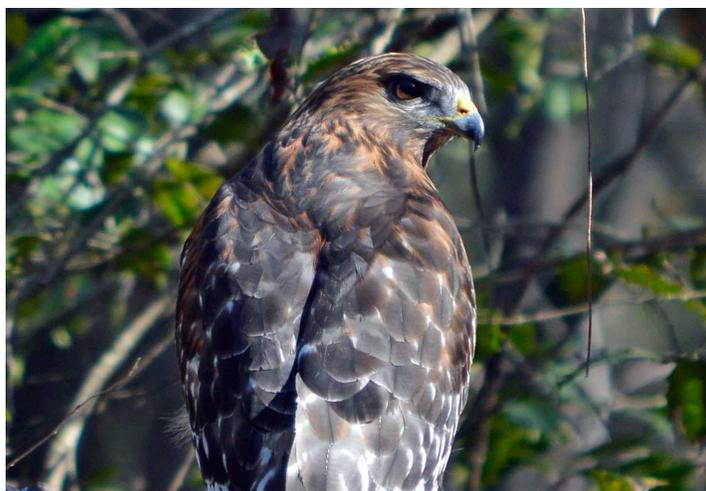
BYE-BYE!



**Thanks to our "camera ready" photographers for the following captures!**



**Dinner on the "joggling" board at *Ronnie Hucks'* house**



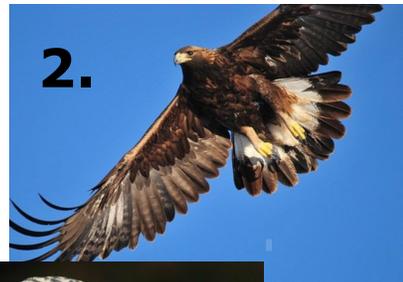
***Ronnie Hucks* finds inspiration in the wilds of Congaree Park and Florence County for these beauties!**



**A walk on the wild side with Roseate Spoonbills, Plovers and White Pelicans were spotted by *Shelly Palomaki* while on vacation in Sanibel, FL**

## The Top 10 Fastest Birds in the World!

- #10 The Canvasback is the slowest at 73 MPH
- #9 The Grey Headed Albatross is slightly faster at 78.9 MPH
- #8 The Red Breasted Merganser sails by at 81 MPH
- #7 The Spur Winged Goose travels 88 MPH
- #6 The Frigate Bird posts an impressive 95 MPH
- #5 The Eurasian Hobby soars at 100 MPH
- #4 The White-throated Needletail edges by with 105 MPH
- #3 The Gyrfalcon captures this spot with 130 MPH
- #2 The Golden Eagle hits the mark at 200 MPH
- #1 ...and the winner is the Peregrine Falcon at a record 242 MPH!!!

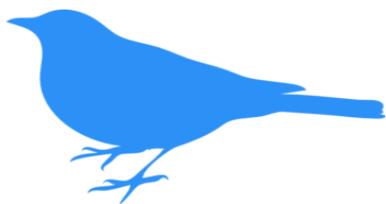


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**NUMBER**

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**

**P.O. Box 5151**

**Aiken, SC 29803-5151**

**TO:**

