



Nest Box News

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South Carolina Bluebird Society

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The Count Is In and The Winner Is....

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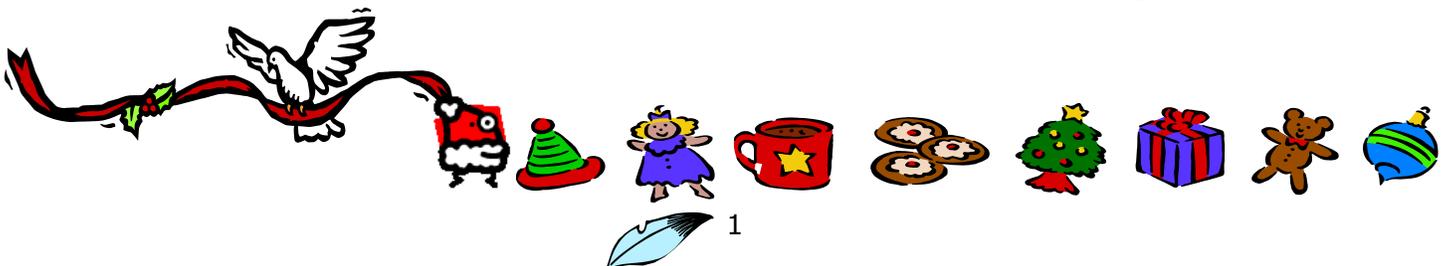
Did this year's nesting season seem longer, or is it just me? Actually, the statistics show that most trail monitors first nest box activity ran *later* this year than last. Counts are also down on several previously successful trails. Add to this the small matter of hosting an *international* bluebird conference, and I can see how the season seemed longer! With the conference behind us, the South Carolina Bluebird Society can begin to focus on repairing, relocating and weatherproofing nest boxes on the trails. Classroom education talks will be starting soon, and I think the Trail Committee will have a few new trails to set up. We also have gotten very serious with screech owl boxes in the Woods (read more in my article on pg. 4). A big, hearty **"thank-you"** for your dedication to the SCBS *and* cavity nesting birds here in South Carolina. We're all winners!!

A proposal has been submitted for standing SCBS committees. Suggestions include: Nominating, Hospitality, Trail, Newsletter, Membership, Publicity, Education, Annual Meeting. These are fairly self-explanatory and with more "birds in the nest" we can come up with some great ideas and help prevent "migration" for those who have "too many mealworms" on their plates!

Think about joining...Thanks!

Terry McGrath

In order to see the birds it is necessary to be a part of the silence—Robert Lynd





From The President... Jim Burke



Fellow Bluebirders,

2013 has indeed been a busy year for SCBS. Our bluebird trails and nest boxes increased from 35 and 378 in 2012 to 52 and 542 in 2013 when we added in the new 10 screech owl box trail in Hitchcock Woods. Congratulations and thank you to the 40 SCBS members who helped make the 2013 NABS Conference a huge success! It required a lot of work and attention to detail which was reflected by the many positive comments received from attendees. Also contributing to the success was the quality of the speakers, interesting and informative field trips and donations of art work and other items by local artists and businesses and the City of Aiken, Newberry Hall and Woodside Plantation Country Club.

Our membership is strong and continues to grow and spread to other areas of South Carolina. One of the goals for 2014 is to have more opportunities for members to participate in SCBS at whatever level they have an interest and time for. Some of our meetings will feature guest speakers on a variety of topics. Please refer to [page 5](#) for upcoming meetings and activities and mark your calendar. Speaking of interesting activities, I recently treated myself to a motion-activated, digital wildlife camera that I purchased at Birds & Butterflies. This thing is way too much fun!! It takes still photos and video with sound day or night. It also includes time lapse photo. When not capturing wildlife in my yard, I plan to place it on SCBS bluebird trails when we have predator problems so we can ID the culprit and determine ways to fix the problem. I am looking forward to an interesting and enjoyable 2014 for SCBS. Please join in.

Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year.

Jim

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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 October, November and December!**

If you need another reason to get involved...the lucky members who have been helping with the renovations of our current bluebird nest box trails over the last few weeks have been rewarded with the sightings of: killdeer, cedar waxwings, goldfinch, hawks, vultures, woodpeckers, white throated sparrows and of course, bluebirds!



The Hitchcock Woods Foundation has allotted funds for 7+ problem nest boxes on the trail to be fitted on poles instead of trees!

Also, if you're interested in the field trip scheduled for Feb. 22nd to The Santee Coastal Preserve, let Jim Burke know. Depending on the number of sign-ups, we may be able to rent a 15 passenger van. Go to: <http://www.scgreatoutdoors.com/park-santeecoastalpreservewma.html> for more info on the area. Plan on a fee of \$10-15 per person.



PASS IT ON!



Hospitality

Bluebert's in the holiday spirit!



Can you spot him in his holiday garb?

Find **Bluebert** and get a \$5.00 gift certificate from *Birds & Butterflies*. Email Terry McGrath at mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net with your guess!

Cathy Kvartek has generously agreed to provide us with refreshments for our upcoming meetings in January, February, March & April...*Thanks, Cathy!*



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, call Jim Burke, SCBS President.

New Real Estate in the Woods

By: Terry McGrath

Lovely home in protected Woods. Quiet and peaceful, this exquisite home site has just been completed by the renowned SCBS of Aiken, SC. Surrounded by evergreen and deciduous trees, fresh water and an abundance of dining options, these homes are sure to fill up fast! Fly by today and stake your claim...

This is how the real estate ad would read for the newest addition of ten screech owl nest boxes throughout Hitchcock Woods. Thanks to the Hitchcock Woods Foundation, and the success of the two screech owl boxes that were set up earlier this year (with one box fledging four screech owls) the funds were approved for the nest boxes. Our crew set off November 7, 2013 to install the boxes. Ron Brenneman, myself, and Jon Steinbach met Bennett Tucker, Eric Grande and his dog, Ozzie for the install. With drills, ladders, and enthusiasm we headed out for the sites Ron had mapped out as potentially "prime owl country". About two and one-half hours later we returned to our own vehicles, satisfied with our project. I'm not sure, but I think I saw a screech owl checking out box #6 as we pulled



away. Monitoring of this trail will begin in late January...I know what *I'm* asking for this Christmas! Keep your fingers crossed!

Bennett Tucker, Hitchcock Woods superintendent, mounts one of the new screech owl boxes.



Screech Owl Facts

☆ **Stocky compact owl with large head and almost no neck.**

☆ **Grayish or reddish-brown with yellow eyes. Super camouflage due to pattern of bands and spots.**

☆ **More often heard than seen. Trilling or whinnying song sounds like a "horse in the sky".**



L to R: Bennett Tucker, Ron Brenneman, Ozzie, Eric Grande and Jon Steinbach



Save The Date

Member Meetings* 7:00 pm

January 27, 2014 SCBS Annual Report, Trail Monitor Training

February 24, 2014 Robert Abernethy, guest speaker on the Long Leaf Pine Alliance

March 24, 2014 James Knight, author of [The Venomous Snakes & Their Mimics of Panama & Costa Rica](#)

April 28, 2014 Topic to be determined

Board Meetings* 6:00 pm

February 10, 2014

May 12, 2014

August 11, 2014

November 10, 2014

2014 Schedule of Bluebird Presentations to Outside Organizations

January 12, 2:00 pm Wild Birds Unlimited, Charleston

February 12, 19 & 26 - 8:15-9:00 am, Kennedy Middle School

February, 25, 6:30 pm, Dogwood Garden Club, Augusta
March 6, Noon, Town & Country Club, USCA

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

April 15, 1130 - 1215, Hillside Garden Club, Augusta

A complete list of all 16 lectures in the series are available at Birds & Butterflies. 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, January 14 "Identifying Backyard Birds"

Tuesday February 4 "How To Attract & Enjoy Bluebirds & Other Cavity Nesters

Monday, February 24 Owl Prowl at Silver Bluff Audubon Center (field trip) Rain date Feb. 27

Tuesday, March 11 (NEW) "Bats in Trouble: The Truth About Bats

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

Upcoming Trips

February 22, 2014 Santee Coastal Preserve Wildlife Management Area

May 3-10, 2014 Costa Rica Birding Trip(14 of 16 spaces filled)





WHO, WHO, WHO Merry Christmas

Ask Dr. Ron

Dr. Ron writes about our newest cavity nester we've been helping with nest boxes this year- The diminutive Eastern Screech Owl (*Otus asio*) is the smallest native owl in our area. At just 9 inches tall and with a wingspan of only 20 inches, it is considerably smaller than our three other native owls. It is often preyed upon by the Great-horned and Barred owl.

The nocturnal screech owl is a year-round resident and does well around suburban homes as well as in a forest. It feeds primarily on night-flying insects, small mammals (mice, etc.) and small birds.

Screech owls have yellow eyes and occur in two color phases, grey or a red/brown. Young owls can be either color and a brood of owls can have a mixture of the two colors.

Screech owls nest naturally in tree cavities but will readily use man-made nest boxes. They begin nesting in February and lay 4-5 white or cream colored eggs. The first two eggs are laid two days apart, then one egg per day until the clutch is completed. Incubation begins after the first egg is laid so the young in a brood may be several days apart in age. The incubation period is roughly 26 days and is done by the female. The young fledge approximately 28 days after hatching. Both parents feed the young while in the nest.

Editors Note: Help us help all our cavity nesting feathered friends! Volunteer to be a trail monitor, help with the establishment of new trails or the renovations of existing trails. What better way to start the day than in the company of God's creatures with friends! No experience necessary! Contact *Ron Brenneman, Roger Brock or Glen Hendry* if you would like to help.

Terry McGrath





What's In Your Backyard?

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



Photos by Glen and Gail Hendry during their summer trip to Custer State Park in South Dakota.

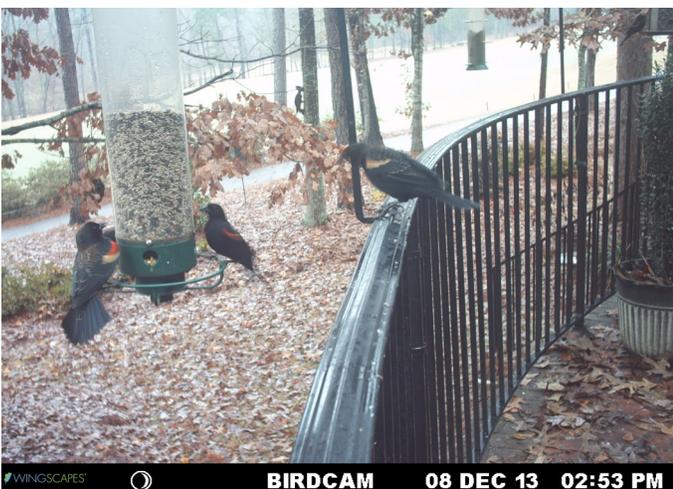


Baby, it's cold outside! Our Backyard feature of Western Bluebirds is sure to warm our hearts!

Candid Camera Shots Take Bird Watching To New Heights

Jim Burke mentioned his newest activity in this month's President's Message, but I didn't know it would involve undercover surveillance with a touch of candid camera!

Check out the activity that happens when no one's watching at the Burke residence...



Top ,left & right: Delightful deer stop by for a late lunch. The fawn is less than 1 year old.

Middle, left & right: Could this be the "sad" bluebird? How many different birds can you see?

Bottom, left & right: Wearing their colors with pride! Look closely; there are two "bandits"!

Nest Box Repairs Under Way



Looks like a nice place to

live, doesn't it? Well, the SCBS has been hitting the trails repairing, cleaning and weatherproofing nest boxes on many of our trails. Trail monitors can let the Trail committee know if you have any renovations to be made. The bluebirds will be very appreciative!

Trails Available For 2014 Include:

Aiken Co. Historical Museum, **4 boxes** Mead Hall-Aiken Prep Campus, **6 boxes** Silver Bluff Audubon Center, **28 boxes** Aiken Middle School (May—August), **9 boxes**



Please help if you can!

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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TO: