



Nest Box News



SPRING 2021

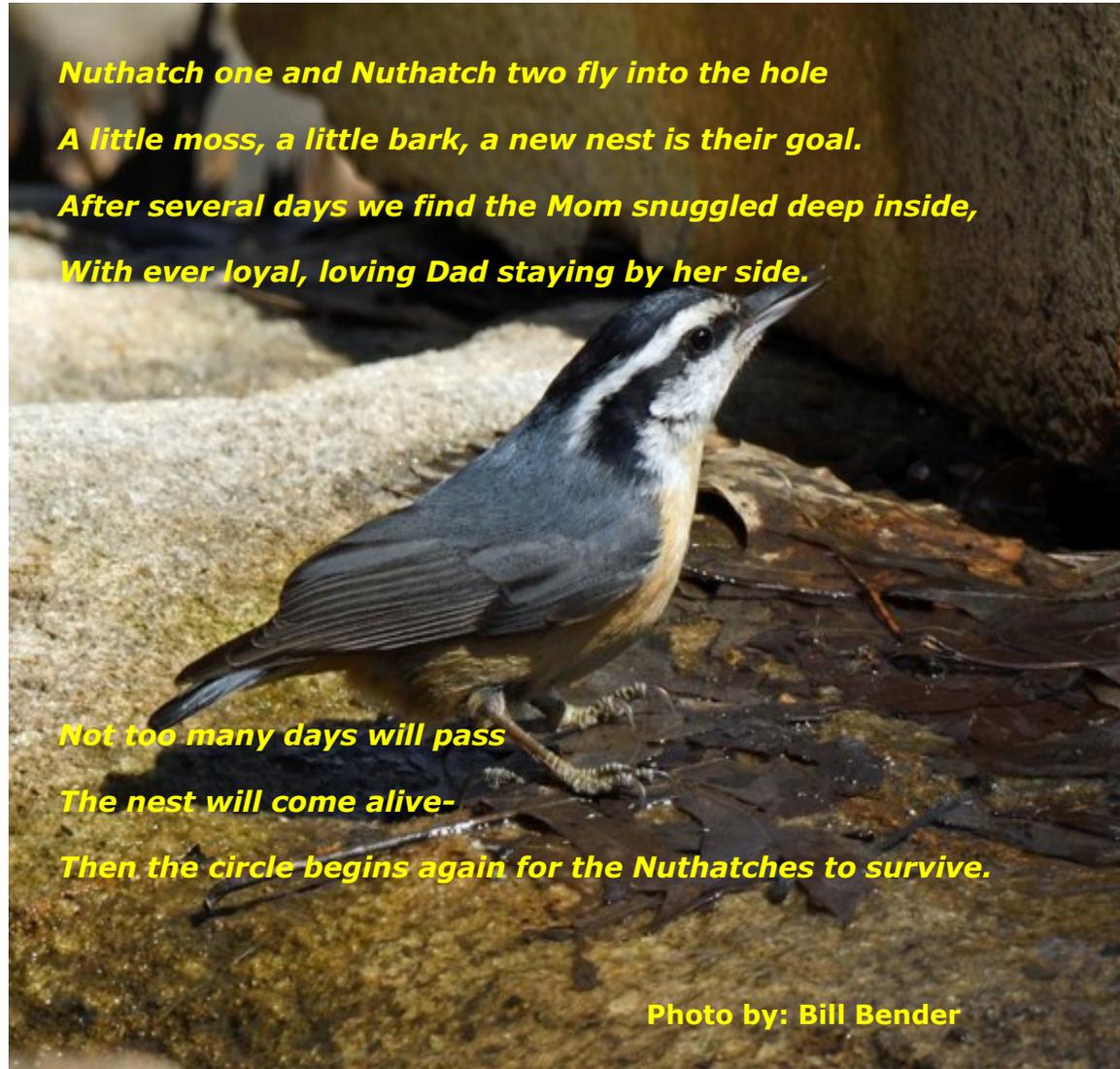
www.southcarolinabluebirds.org

Volume 10 Issue 2

An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

Inside This Issue

President's Perspective	2
Insider News	3
Nest Cams—101	4,5,6
Save the Date	7
SCBS Directory	8
From the Archives	9
Ask Your Friends	10
Flatwoods Park Photos	11,12
Tundra Swans	13
Bluebird Brigade	14
Did You Know	15
Bye-Bye	16



*Nuthatch one and Nuthatch two fly into the hole
 A little moss, a little bark, a new nest is their goal.
 After several days we find the Mom snuggled deep inside,
 With ever loyal, loving Dad staying by her side.*

*Not too many days will pass
 The nest will come alive-
 Then the circle begins again for the Nuthatches to survive.*

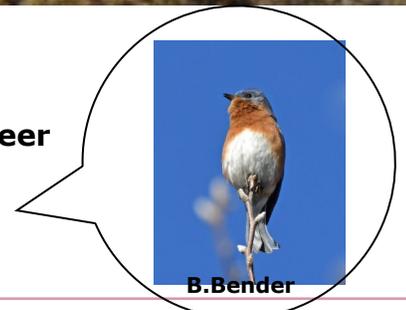
Photo by: Bill Bender

Birds of a feather flock together...

William Turner

From The Editor: Trying on a few "new looks" for the newsletter. Check out **page 3** for some new "news" and **page 7** for more volunteer opportunities...

Terry McGrath



President's Perspective *by Mike DeBruhl*



Hurrah - - - our 2021 season is well underway and we are receiving good news reports from our dedicated Monitors across the State! A big THANK YOU to all our bird lovers as you look out for our feathered friends.

Our preliminary reports indicate that, at least here in the Aiken area, we are seeing an increase in the number of Brown-Headed Nuthatch and Chickadee nesting, eggs and babies! These beautiful birds normally have only one brood per season So please be sure to clean out the box after they fledge. Then, our Blues should hopefully be moving back into those nest boxes soon.

Many of you have been asking when we may be resuming our monthly meetings and educational programs. GOOD QUESTION and one that your Board of Directors has also been contemplating. We hope to resume, pandemic willing, our monthly programs and meetings in August or September - - so stand by for further updates.

In the meantime, we are participating and conducting, on a limited basis, a few educational programs (mostly outside events) and trail walks / talks with a limited, distanced, and vaccinated attendance. We are very pleased to see folks again and to be sharing information.

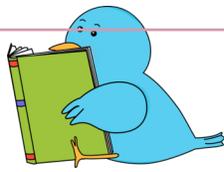
This fall, we will be selecting and designating our next SCBS Bluebird Habitat. We will keep you informed as we finalize the details to recognize our SCBS communities / trails demonstrating two + year track record of community involvement and participation, monitoring, timely reporting, education, and nest box expansion. More to follow on that as well.

Please continue to be as the season progress and keep those monitoring reports coming in to our Data Guru, Glen Hendry. Stay Well, Stay Safe and see you On the Trails!!

Mike



Insider News!



By: Terry McGrath

DON'T MISS THE DEADLINE!

N The Nestbox News and our website at www.southcarolinabluebirds.org is looking
E at a merchandise section to make available a
W variety of shirts, ball caps, prints and stamps, etc. More to come...

Deadlines for contributions to the Nest Box News are: Jan 15, April 15, July 15 and Oct 15 send your pictures, comments or articles to:
mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net

!!! ATTENTION !!!

N We value all our SCBS members for their
E interest in keeping the Bluebirds and all
W cavity nesting numbers strong, but we
S still need help! As we break the Covid chains and get a little more "normal", consider volunteering at a presentation or event. It's a great way to connect with others and help spread the word! Let me know what you think...mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net

Use **AmazonSmile** for your online shopping!! When you shop, designate SCBS as your non-profit charity of choice and they will donate 0.5% of your purchase total to SCBS .



GREAT FOR A GIFT!

Lifetime Memberships are available. If you're interested in finding out more, contact Mary Shultz at: shultzim@att.net.

Bluebird factsheets are now available on the **North American Bluebird Society** website. The one titled "**Getting Started with Bluebirds**" is a great way to familiarize yourself and others with the joy of monitoring bluebirds and promoting healthy habitats for them.



Another great reason for becoming a member of the SCBS is Member pricing for a complete nest box, pole and baffle is 75.00. Non- members would pay \$88.00!

For information on joining NABS, see <http://nabluebirdsociety.org>
For information on bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds in SC, go to <http://southcarolinabluebirds.org>





Nest Cams — 101

By: Monty Carter

Lately I have seen more and more interest in installing cameras inside the nest box. With the ever-improving world of personal home security cameras, it is becoming an increasingly easy wish to fulfill. Given this growing interest, I thought I would share my personal experience and offer some recommendations and advice. And I'll begin by disclosing, I'm no expert. This information is just what I've learned from setting up my own cameras and doing a little research on the options available.

Firstly, I think it would be good to cover a few points regarding putting the birds needs first. The wellbeing of the birds using the nest box must always come first before our desire to record and watch them inside the box. At all times keep this in mind when choosing the type of camera you'll use and how you'll mount it in the box. This is especially true when thinking through how you might need to adjust the camera, or perhaps change or recharge batteries, after a brood has started. It's illegal to tamper with a nest of a native bird; but also, we don't want to cause any distress to mother or babies. Consequently, we want to ideally never touch the nest; preferably, never having to enter the nesting cavity at all due to camera maintenance. At the end of the day, if you don't feel you can install a camera without disturbing the birds, it's ok to abandon the idea and just rely on watching the birds from your window with a pair of binoculars.

I will first differentiate the camera options based on 2 groupings. 1.) Cameras that require either a power or data transfer cable to be run to the camera. 2.) Cameras that are entirely wireless, relying on battery power and Wi-Fi communication.

A downside of a wired camera is the limitation of having to be able to run a cable (power or data) from your home to the box. Some cameras are just for live viewing, while others have options for either recording to a memory card or some other piece of hardware. Some of these options do have Wi-Fi communication abilities and only require a cable to be run for electricity. Often these cameras are smaller in size and can fit inside a traditional nest box. There usually isn't a reason you would need to open the nest box to access the camera. So, if you can run buried cable from your home (either electric, coax or ethernet) out to the nest box, these could be a good option for you.

The biggest downside to entirely wireless cameras will be limitations related to battery life. You generally will not be able to have continuous recording with a wireless camera since it would drain the battery in a matter of a few hours. Even without continuous recording, you are still likely going to need to recharge or replace batteries at some point during a brood. Accessing the camera without disturbing the nesting cavity will have to be considered if you choose one of these options. The next limitation is that your birdhouse must be within reach of a Wi-Fi signal the camera can transmit over. However, despite all these limitations, wireless cameras are still a very popular option. They are generally cheaper and much easier to install than having to run cables to your box. And they just require an app on your

smart phone or tablet to view the video. If you do go with one of these, I recommend paying close attention to the battery life as fledging day approaches. You don't want to cause early fledging because you scared them while doing a batter change.

There are 4 camera options that I wish to recommend. The wireless ones are the only ones with which I have personal experience. The wired options I'm suggesting below seem to be some of the top options on the market, and I'll just share a little of the details I read about them. For all of these I encourage you to do your own research about how they work before deciding on the camera that's best for you.

Wyze Cam Outdoor – The camera is a 2 ¼ inch cube, rechargeable wireless camera. The starter bundle comes with a base station which the camera communicates with and this base station is what's connected to your internet router. The picture at the top of the article is from the Wyze Cam Outdoor I had mounted in my nest box last year. You connect to the camera using your smart phone or tablet where you can view the live stream from the camera. You can also set it up for recording events based on motion. There are several additional options to explore in the settings. Based on my personal use it will go nearly 1 week during active nesting before it needs recharging. Because of its size, this camera will not fit inside a standard nest box. We'll discuss options for how to install it later. The price tag for 1 camera with base station is approximately \$50.

Blink Outdoor – There are several Blink cameras to choose from, and they vary in price based on how many of them you're buying. Their outdoor wireless camera is approximately a 2 ¾ inch square that's about 1 inch thick. It operates on AA lithium metal batteries, which aren't rechargeable. Likely, depending on the motion event settings you configure, you may have to change those batteries at some point during a brood depending on motion capture settings. Because the camera is flatter, it may be possible to mount it to the inside roof of a traditional nest box; however, if you do need to change batteries during an active brood it's going to present a problem for you to access it without disturbing the birds. Like the Wyze Cam, this one communicates wirelessly to a base station connected to your wireless router.

Green Backyard Wireless Bird Box Camera – This camera is a small option that can fit in a traditional nest box. But it does require you to run electricity to the box (or within 10 meters) to power the camera. The camera itself broadcasts the video wirelessly. They advertise that it needs to be within 15 meters of your Wi-Fi router. It comes with a smartphone app for viewing the live video stream, and you can setup motion notification events like the wireless cameras mentioned above. But this one also offers the ability to have a memory card installed where it can record 24/7 to that card. Then you can look through that recorded video to see a point in time you missed observing live. (Green Backyard has several other camera options for you to consider, so I'd recommend reading up on their other cameras to see if they might better fit your needs.)

Green Feathers – I mention this one simply as another option to consider. They are a UK based company who also offer wired and wireless options like Green Backyard. Bear in mind that the wireless option is just wireless communication; still requiring electricity to be run near the box. It appears one of their wired camera option offerings requires only a Coax cable to be ran from your TV to the camera. So that option would be only for live viewing on your TV.

My final recommendations regarding cameras are concerning the nest box itself.

If you are going with one of the wired cameras, they are small enough that you should be able to mount them inside a typical nest box. You might need to drill a small hole to run the coax or power cable through but should otherwise not have to modify the box. If you're using one of these your goal is to set the camera in place and never have to touch it again while the birds are using the box. If you are going to use one of the battery-powered wireless cameras, my recommendation is not to mount them inside of the nesting cavity. Instead, you will want to build your own box with a detachable attic where you can house the camera separate from the main cavity. There's a hole in the top of the main cavity just big enough for the camera lens and its infrared lights to see through. This allows you to access the camera for recharging the battery without touching anything inside the nesting cavity.

As I said earlier, I've been using the Wyze Cam. To accommodate it I did build my own nest box. I simply built a standard bluebird box with the appropriate dimensions for the main cavity, but then made the roof flat and built the attic (or what I called a top hat) to cover over where the camera sat. If you do build your own box, please remember to consider proper ventilation and preventing rain water from rushing in. Pictured here is that 'top hat' house I built. I would consider it a crude build for my first attempt and intend to redesign for something that looks nicer in the years to come.

I would also recommend this design. I believe the next time I build a box, I will attempt to make a variation of this one to make it easier to remove the camera for charging.

<https://birds.walkingdown.com/birdhouse/>

I hope this information is helpful for those that have been wanting to setup a camera in the nest box but didn't know where to start. I'll leave you with a final link below to a guide from NestWatch on this same topic. Do your research on what will work best for you, and best of luck in your digital bird watching.

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/installing-a-nest-box-camera/>



Save The Date 2021

Until further notice all presentations and meetings have been suspended. We feel it is best to have a "different" schedule to keep all of us safe and healthy! However, some of the Board members are considering holding Zoom meetings on various topics. Contact one of the Board members with any ideas you may have...

Some of the options coming up include:

***Presentations**

May 1, 2021 Hopeland Gardens
May 8, 2021 Gem Lakes
August 4, 2021 Summerville
October 2, 2021 Master Gardeners—Augusta

****Board of Directors Meetings 2 pm @ The Reserve**

June 8, 2021
September 14, 2021
November 9, 2021

***Contact one of your Board members if you are interested in helping**

****Members welcome—call to set up a seat**

If there is anyone with experience writing grants, etc. contact — contact info Mike DeBruhl page 5



SAVE THE DATE Keep checking our FB page and website for more info on upcoming zoom meetings, etc.

*Debbie Reed/reeddebbie1@bellsouth.net

Ronnie Brenneman/birdbflies@aol.com

*Mike DeBruhl/cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net

Terry McGrath/mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net

Jim Sproull/jfsproull@gmail.com

Glen Hendry/gwhendry@hotmail.com

*Tim Bendle/tim.bendle@gmail.com

*Steve Baker/sjbaker614@aol.com

Bluebird Trail Committee

Ron Brenneman/birdbflies@aol.com

Roger Brock/rwbrock@mac.com

Glen & Gail Hendry/gwhendry@hotmail.com

Membership

Mary Shultz/shultzim@att.net

Website

www.southcarolinabluebirds.org
www.bluesalamandersolutions.com

SCBS Newsletter Editor

Terry McGrath/mcgrathjtl@atlanticbb.net

Nest Box News

Facebook Page Editor

Nancy Moseley/fmoseley@bellsouth..net

www.facebook.com/groups/
SouthCarolinaBluebirdSociety

SCBS DIRECTORY

Officers

Director Emeritus

Jim Burke

President

Mike DeBruhl/cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net

Vice President

Steve Baker/sjbaker614@aol.com

Secretary

Debbie Reed/reeddebbie1@bellsouth.net

Treasurer

Tim Bendle/tim.bendle@gmail.com



Photos by: Bill Bender

FROM THE ARCHIVES ...

Volume 4, Number 2

Spring 1982



Lawrence Zeleny answered a members' question in his "Question Corner" column. I wonder what his answer would be today??

Can bluebird boxes be mounted on telephone poles? If so, do I need permission first?

Telephone and other utility poles are excellent places to mount bluebird nesting boxes, but permission should be secured from the utility company. This is often difficult to obtain. In the hotter parts of the country, overheating of nesting boxes is sometimes a problem. This can be avoided when utility poles are used by mounting the boxes on the northeast side of the poles.



Editors' note: A lot has been learned about nest box placement in the past 39 years! Wouldn't be easy today with the steel poles!!

**Ask
Your
Friends**



A member shares a poem about bluebirds. Some great ideas *do* come from Covid -19!

1 inch

2 inch

3 inch

4...



**Watch the bluebird carry more.
Day by day their nursery grows.
What have we here?
The future is 5 Bluebird eggs,
Designed to bring us cheer.**



Fresh from Florida... Trail Photos Shared By Mary Miller

Flatwoods Park Photos 4-5-2021



Newly hatched CC chicks in box F32



Week old CC chicks in box F17



Two week old CC chicks in box F30, about ready to fledge.



BB eggs in box F35.



Female Titmouse sitting on her nest-Balm Boyette Park, Florida

Photo by: Steve Ricket



Chickadee and Titmice chicks look very similar. That is because they are cousins in the bird world. That is why their chicks have the same blue coloring while they are getting their feathers, much like the Bluebird chicks. It's not until the chicks are getting ready to fledge, like the Chickadee chicks in box F30 on [page 11](#) that they begin to look like the adult birds.

Mary Miller—Tampa Audubon Society



Thanks to SCBS member [Barbara Beach](#) for sharing these incredible photos of Tundra Swans! The photo on the lower left shows the swans "tipping up" to reach submerged vegetation. They are quite fond of all sorts of corn, rice and soybean crops, etc. but also use their bills and feet to scoop up clams from the muddy bottom.



Photo courtesy of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Several years back, the SCBS was asked to set up a Bluebird trail for the new community of Summers Corner in Summerville, SC. The property changed hands and the trail was left unmonitored. To the rescue, the:

Summers Corner Bluebird Brigade

Summers Corner in Summerville, South Carolina has started a program with the children of the neighborhood to help monitor our bluebirds. The program is called The Summers Corner Bluebird Brigade. We currently have two bluebird trails within the neighborhood. The children will monitor and clean boxes on a weekly basis. They attended a short class through the Summers Corner Garden Club on the basic facts of bluebirds, how to clean and prepare the boxes, and record their findings. The Summers Corner Garden Club hopes that the children enjoy the experience and will learn the important roles that birds play in everyday life.

A special shout out to the children and their adult mentors...we appreciate your hard work and dedication!

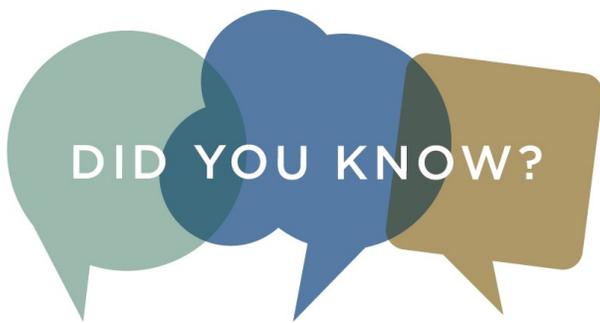
The children monitoring the trails have been invited to submit a 25-50 word essay on their experiences with their trail this season. The winner's essay will be published in the Fall issue of the Nest Box News.

LIFETIME MEMBERS

Alexander, Karen, Antaki, Charlotte, Bendle, Tim & Mary, Brant, Doug & Elena, Brenneman, Ron & Dori, Brock, Roger, Burke, Jim & Sharon, Call, Tracie, Carter, Monty, Chin, Ed & Cindy, DeBruhl, Mike, Eastman, Caroline, Frick, Randy, Fuller, Muf, Hendry, Glen & Gail, Hill, Jim & Jackie, Hurst, Cindy, Koehler, Paul, Krauss, Janis, Moseley, David & Nancy, Myers, Greg & Shirley, Oliff, Barry & Cyndy, O'Neill, Bob & Barbara, Petit, Elizabeth, Powers, Amie, Radford, Scott, Raynor, Robert, Reed, Debbie and Randy, Rodin, James, Sacks, David & Maggi, Shultz, Mary, Simpson, Jean, Smith, Elizabeth, Snyder, Debbie, Tucker, Bill & Sandy

CONSIDER A LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP FOR \$200





Did you know? The SCBS currently has 113 trails throughout the State. AND for the first time we have monitors for all the trails! And that's a total of 1774 boxes!

SSCBS is one of 61 Affiliates of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) across Canada and the USA ?

There is no one single perfect, ultimate bluebird nest box. Dozens of different nest box designs are being used with success by bluebird landlords throughout North America

Perches encourage predators and undesirable House Sparrows. Do not use a perch on your nest box

"Critter Baffles" are strongly encouraged / needed in South Carolina - -Rat Snakes, Raccoons, etc.

House Wrens, which are legally protected and ecologically valuable native birds, will enter a nest box, poke small holes in the eggs and sometimes toss some or all of the eggs out onto the ground. House Sparrows, which are a non-native pest species, may also do the same.

BLUEBIRD PECKING ON YOUR WINDOW !! During nesting season, both male and female bluebirds are extremely territorial. Typically, the male aggressively defends the edges of the territory, while the female tends to defend the area around the nest site. When bluebirds display territorial behaviors at windows, they may be reacting to what they perceive to be a rival bird. While seldom resulting in death or injury, this behavior can increase stress levels (for both the birds and YOU!). The behavior generally ceases once egg laying commences.

Bye! See you next issue...



Photo by: Bill Bender



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 29804-5151



A member of SCBS? Great! Thinking of joining a group of like-minded "bird brains"? Contact us and we'll open the door to the best bird house around! We're over 1,000+ members and that's a lot of ideas, tips, and opinions! We'd love to hear yours! And while you're at it, consider a membership with our North American Bluebird Society (NABS). Go to www.nabluebirdsociety.org for info on how to join and a goldmine of information and printable PDF fact sheets on all things Bluebird and cavity nesters. If you are interested in backyard birding or a trail, this site is good for refreshing and new monitors. Consider a membership now to both sites and fly with us!

