

TEXAS Blues

The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society

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Volume 6

Issue 2



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Keynote Speaker, University of Georgia's Dr. Patricia Adair Gowaty • World authorities address house sparrows, fire ants and paper wasps • Presenters will focus on Eastern, Mountain and Western Bluebirds •

Other activities: bus trips to Atlanta, the Georgia Botanical Garden and Stone Mountain; a local bird walk; a silent auction; educational exhibits and vendors; a NABS reunion and Affiliates dinner; a "Bluebird L" breakfast; and the annual awards banquet with Celtic music

Registration fee covers admission to all presentations and Saturday, and is required for attendance. As guests of the Georgia Center you will have access to its campus bus system, which boards in front of the Georgia Center. University of Georgia Walking Tour information is available at the Concierge Desks. Parking is limited. An \$8-per-day charge for the parking garage next to the Georgia Center may be added to your room bill. Consider parking your car and taking advantage of the buses that are available.

Register by July 30th and receive TEN quilt raffle tickets. Registration form inserted in this issue.

"Our" bluebirds take starring roles!

Vanessa Voisinet, a new TBS member, shared this photo (snapped by her husband, Richard) by email with family and



friends. Vanessa's mom forwarded the photo to Houston's Channel 2 News (KHOU), and it won their hearts. During two morning broadcasts the photo displayed on a huge background screen.

The newscaster shared that the couple that took the photo in their yard belonged to Texas Bluebird Society. Vanessa wrote, "I really liked that they brought up TBS; and, hopefully more people might check into Eastern Bluebirds."

A Lake Tawokoni State Park bluebird in a TBS-provided nestbox with David Shiel's HeatShields and 1 ½ inch fake holes (to catch the attention of bluebird flying overhead) graced the cover of the Spring issue of "Bluebird," the journal of the North American Bluebird Society. Our Lake Tawokoni trail was installed by David's scout troop before the park opened in early 2002. The group tent-camped the night of the 13-inch mid-December 2001 rain. "Built character," said Shiels a TBS charter board member.

Photo courtesy of Melanie Estep.



Willing to submit photos for Texas Bluebird Society to share? Send

photos to photos@texasbluebirdsociety.org Our new photo librarian is Yoshi Beal, in The Woodlands. Yoshi responded to a plea on VolunteerMatch.org. Many of our photos appear in the Photo Gallery of our TBS website, www.texasbluebirdsociety.org

Check out the new banner on our website, created by Yoshi!

Sparrow Spooker Protects Bluebirds

By Linda Crum

"Without question the most deplorable event in the history of American ornithology was the introduction of the English Sparrow." -W.L. Dawson, *The Birds of Ohio*, 1903

Bluebirds have made a remarkable recovery in this country due to people like you who have put up nestboxes to house bluebirds. Secondary cavity nesters, bluebirds are unable to make their own cavity. They rely on natural cavities, old cavities carved out by woodpeckers or on nestboxes provided by you.

Providing a nestbox is only the first step in assuring that the bluebird will nest successfully and fledge their young. Many predators are known to prey on bluebirds—snakes, raccoons and cats. Proper mounting and installation of a predator guard on the nestbox is necessary to protect the birds. It is better not to put up a nestbox at all than to put up one that leaves bluebirds vulnerable to predators.

<http://www.sialis.org/baffle.htm>

Bluebird landlords are learning that there is another predator that arrives by air that is a very aggressive competitor—the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus* or HOSP). These birds were introduced into the United States in the late 1800's and often evict native birds from the nestbox. They not only break and remove eggs but kill both adult and nestling birds. Bluebirds are defenseless against the powerful beak of the HOSP.

<http://www.sialis.org/hospattacks.htm>

HOSP are non-native, invasive birds and federal law allows removal and destruction of their nests, eggs, adults and nestlings. Passive and active HOSP control methods are available. One of the most popular and effective passive methods of protecting the box against HOSP is the sparrow spooker. Properly installed on the nestbox, the spooker is virtually 100% successful in deterring the house sparrow from entering the nestbox.

Installation of the sparrow spooker on the nestbox is done immediately *after* the first egg is laid. It will not discourage bluebirds from entering the nestbox once the first egg is laid. It will “spook” the HOSP and none will enter the box. The spooker remains on the box until the young fledge. It is removed immediately after fledging to encourage a second nesting by the bluebird and to avoid HOSP becoming so familiar with it that they are no longer “spooked.”

A sparrow spooker may spook sparrows but it served as an “icebreaker” between neighbors for TBS member Vanessa Voisinet. She got acquainted with her neighbor when he said, “What’s that?” The spooker helped Vanessa and her husband, Richard, educate neighbors about proper techniques for mounting nestboxes. Vanessa said, “It is hard to believe a stick with shiny ribbon attached to a pole on top of a bird box brought two people together.”



Above: This protected nestbox sits in the backyard of Linda Crum in The Woodlands. She added the Sparrow spooker after the 1st egg was laid, and removed it when the babies fledged.

Homemade sparrow spookers are easy. The one pictured below was made by Dave Kinneer who lives in Virginia and takes the most fabulous pictures. <http://www.pbase.com/uncledave> He used old hose connectors with a 45 degree elbow and a one-to-two splitter. Dowel rods were inserted in the holes and secured with screws. Duct tape was used to attach the Mylar strips to the dowels. Instructions for making sparrow spookers can be found at <http://www.sialis.org/sparrowspooker.htm>

Thanks to Bet Zimmerman and her website <http://www.sialis.org> for information included in this article.

Linda Crum is a Texas Master Naturalist, Texas Master Gardener and Treasurer of the Texas Bluebird Society. She can be reached at txorganicgardener@gmail.com

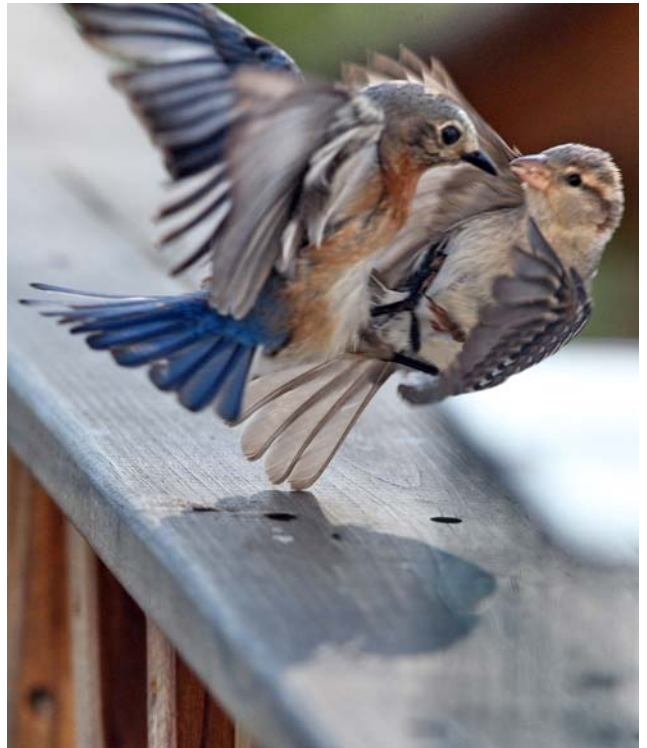
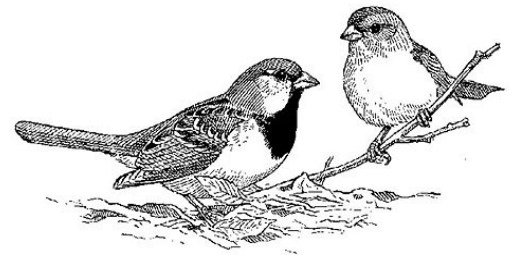


Photo courtesy of David Kinneer. A recent post on the Bluebird Forum of Gardenweb reported House Sparrow teamwork - the male HOSP chased the male bluebird while the female went into the box and killed the female bluebird.

This non-native bird must not be allowed to nest.
House Sparrow graphics courtesy of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology / Home Study Course



A
bove: *Homemade Sparrow Spooker*
Photos courtesy of Dave Kinneer



House Sparrows have the ability to nest in many, many locations, yet they will often deprive our native birds of the only sort of nesting niche they have available to them. Likewise, European Starlings take over virtually every Red-bellied Woodpecker nest in my neighborhood. The woodpeckers works months making the nests, then the more aggressive starlings push them out. House Sparrows and European Starlings are not evil birds at all...they just are not native to North America and they should not been here. Nature provided them a niche in Europe and man they cause many problems for the birds that are supposed to be here. This is just another example of why it's not nice to mess with Mother Nature!

Greg Lasley, Austin
(from *TexBirds*, February 19, 2007)

2007 TBS Calendar

Saturday, August 18th

Bluebird Symposium, Camp Chaparral, Wichita Falls

Bluebird Bob Walshaw. Also: Denise Townsend, Kevin McCurdy, and Laura Packer. Early morning nature walk led by local birders. Option at 11 a.m. of a tasting at Wichita Falls Winery, just down the street OR a presentation on bats with live bats! .Silent Auction. For details or to donate an auction item, contact John Cys, 940.691.5702. **Registration form inserted in this issue.**

Friday, October 5th

TBS Annual Dinner & Auction *

McKinney Falls State Park Dining Hall (Austin)

Our annual meeting will be in conjunction with the Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO. This year we'll have a casual get-together with an evening meal and sharing with one another of season's experiences on Friday evening, after setting up our booth at EXPO. A limited number of McKinney Falls campsites are available through TBS for Friday night and/or Saturday night. Contact Pauline Tom, ptom5678@gmail.com or 512.268.5678 to reserve a spot. We have the dining hall reserved, too.

Saturday, October 6th & Sunday, October 7th

Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO (Austin) *

To volunteer to work our booth, contact Ann Thames, semahta@yahoo.com or 979.278.3053. About 40,000 visit this festival! "Expertise" is not required – just a willingness to accept registrations and distribute nestboxes.

"One Nestbox" membership_nestbox exchange will be offered at all events. New members (and renewals) will receive a complimentary nestbox.



Please submit observations from nestbox visits to

www.nestwatch.org. Once you register the "nest site" information, it will be in the system year after year. It may not be apparent, but you may register each nestbox as a nest site, even without a "first nesting."

TBS supplied a copy of the "Multiple Nest Site Visits" data collection form, along with codes, in Volume 6, Issue 1. If you need the form, it can be downloaded at www.nestwatch.org. Or, contact TBS and we'll be pleased to print a set for you.

This is the pilot year. Please report any glitches or make suggestions through the "Contact Us" option on each page on the website.

Texas Bluebird Society
P O Box 40868
Austin TX 78704



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Return Service Requested



"Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time"

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TEXAS BLUES

*This newsletter of Texas Bluebird Society
is published 4 - 5 times a year*

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N A B S 2 0 0 7 BLUEBIRD PARTNERSHIPS Science of Bluebirds

THE GEORGIA CENTER, ATHENS
SEPTEMBER 20 - 23, 2007
WWW.NABS2007.COM

910.673.6936

NABS invites you to Athens, Georgia for its milestone 30th convention, the first we've hosted ourselves. There were fewer local organizations when NABS set out to serve people interested in bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting species who had no local group, and to link the ones there were across North America.

Our new aspirations are to add value to the efforts of our Affiliates throughout the continent, to not lose touch with our grass roots, and to continue to support those without organizations. Our program mixes an impressive list of distinguished academic specialists with fun recreational events.

Keynote Speaker, University of Georgia's Dr. Patricia Adair Gowaty, will elaborate on the Bluebird Partnerships. World authorities will address house sparrows, fire ants and paper wasps. Other esteemed presenters will focus on Eastern, Mountain and Western Bluebirds. There will be bus trips to Atlanta, the Georgia Botanical Garden and Stone Mountain; a local bird walk; a silent auction; educational exhibits and vendors; a NABS reunion and Affiliates dinner; a "Bluebird L" breakfast; and the annual awards banquet with Celtic music. This Convention should prove to be an exceptionally rewarding educational experience as well as a lot of fun.

The registration fee covers admission to all presentations and the Saturday, Sept. 22 lunch. It will be a box lunch you can eat in any of the public areas of the Georgia Center, or take back to your room for some quiet time between the morning and afternoon conference sessions. Registration is required for attendance at any program, field trip or event.

As guests of the Georgia Center you will have access to its campus bus system. Any time you would like to check out downtown Athens on Thursday or Friday, or take a riding tour of the campus, you may board the bus in front of the Georgia Center.

University of Georgia Walking Tour information is available at the Concierge Desk, where they can answer many questions about the area and provide needed directions.

Parking is limited. An \$8-per-day charge for the parking garage next to the Georgia Center may be added to your room bill. Consider parking your car and taking advantage of the buses that are available.

Registration

Name	NABS #
Street Address	City
State or Province	Zip or PC
Home Phone	Work Phone
E-mail if you wish to be contacted with updates	

At the Convention I should be recognized as: (Please check all that apply.)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1st Time Attendee | <input type="checkbox"/> NABS Affiliate Representative | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibitor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendee of 10 or more | <input type="checkbox"/> NABS Speakers Bureau | <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NABS Board Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Presenter | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trip Leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Former NABS Board Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Artist | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer |

- There will be space limitations on field trips. Reservations will accepted based on postmarks.
- We will send you an acknowledgement postcard within 3 weeks.
- Registrations will be accepted until August 25, 2007. After that, registrations will be accepted depending on availability.
- Cancellations prior to August 25, 2007, will be refunded, less any obligations already made.
- Make room reservations directly with the Georgia Center (800-884-1381). Identify yourself as part of NABS 2007 and Event # 61669.
- It is not necessary to be a NABS member, but please consider joining at the conference.

Meetings, Meals and Field Trips Registration (Check those you wish to attend.)

Cost	Description
<input type="checkbox"/> \$45	Registration for one to three days includes all presentations on Thursday and Saturday as well as Lunch on Saturday.
<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	Thursday Night - NABS Members Reunion and Affiliates Dinner
<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	Friday Night - NABS 2007 Banquet with Awards and Entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	Saturday Morning - "Bluebird L" Breakfast
<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	Saturday Night - Dinner at Georgia Botanical Garden includes bus transportation to Garden
<input type="checkbox"/> \$65	Wednesday Pre-Conference Bus Trip to Atlanta (Aquarium, Cyclorama)
<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	Friday Bus Trip to Georgia Botanical Gardens and Historic Athens. Includes Lunch.
<input type="checkbox"/> \$65	Sunday Post-Conference Bus Trip to Stone Mountain

Total Due

Participants are encouraged to register by July 30, 2007. Forms postmarked this date and earlier will be rewarded with TEN (10) quilt raffle tickets.

Checks should be made payable to NABS 2007. Complete this form and return with full payment to:
NABS 2007 c/o Helen Munro, 22 Bobolink Rd., Jackson Springs, NC 27281



