



**Virginia  
Bluebird  
Society**

# The Bird Box

## Spring 2008

### Calendar

**March:** Ready your monitoring notebooks. Visit our Web site, click on Forms and PDF files, download Weekly Nestbox Monitoring form.

**April 8, Tue., 1:00 p.m.** Bonsack Garden Club. Bonsack Library or Bonsack United Methodist Church, Roanoke. Contact: Earl Morris.

**April 17, Thurs.** Dr. Caren Cooper of Cornell Lab of Ornithology discusses climate changes and the media's ability to shape attitudes. Shenandoah University. Time and place TBA. Contact Kaycee Lichliter, 540-664-9596.

**April 19, Sat., 1:00 p.m.** Bluebird presentation by Anne Little. Mid-Atlantic Garden Faire, Abingdon.

**April 23, Wed., 8:30 a.m.** Bluebird presentation by Earl Morris. Roanoke Country Club.

**May 9, Fri., 6:30 p.m.** Bluebird presentation by Earl Morris. Sierra Club/Roanoke "Earth Friendly Lecture Series," Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke.

**May 15:** Deadline for your articles and photos for the July *Bird Box*.

**May 16-18:** VSO Annual Meeting, Mountain Lake Hotel, Giles County, with Mountain Lake Birding Festival. Contact Peggy Opengari, 540-921-4340; [www.virginiabirds.net](http://www.virginiabirds.net).

**June 21, Sat., 9:30 p.m. to 12 noon.** Purple Martin Field Day at The Wood Farm in Louisa County. Visit [www.purplemartin.org/meetings](http://www.purplemartin.org/meetings) for directions and details, or contact Ron and Priscilla Kingston at 434-293-5173.

## The Barred Owl

All owls are cavity nesters, if they find a cavity. If not, several, including the Barred Owl (*Strix varia*), will reuse an empty hawk nest, as well as squirrel or crow nests. In the case of the Barred Owl it is usually a Red-shouldered Hawk's nest or even a Cooper's Hawk's nest, because these species inhabit the same type of territory; river banks, streams, and wetlands.

The Barred Owl is medium sized, round headed, gray-brown, and streaked with white horizontal barring on its chest and vertical barring on its belly. It has a longish tail, brown eyes, and a yellow bill that is almost hidden in its facial feathers. Males and females look alike. As in most hawks and owls, the female bird is larger than the male.

Barred Owls live in dense mixed conifer and deciduous forests along river valleys and wooded swamps. They are masters of camouflage and can be very hard to spot. The best time to locate them is during nesting season, which starts in February. These are very vocal owls, calling year round, but especially vocal at the beginning of courtship. Breeding can occur between March and August. It most frequently begins in March.

The loud and resounding call of this owl is a hoot that is repeated in a rhythmic pattern that most birders mimic as "who-cooks-for-you – who-cooks-for-you-all." If mimicked well enough the owl has been known to answer! During breeding season they will "duet", the male's voice being the deeper of the two. They will often call during daylight hours.

The Barred Owl hunts for its prey from a perch. Its food is whatever first comes into view! Meadow voles dominate the menu, but it also hunts deer mice, rats, squirrels, small rabbits, bats, moles, opossums, mink, and weasels. It occasionally takes good-sized birds at their roosts, as well as fish, turtles, frogs, snakes, lizards, crayfish, scorpions, beetles, crickets, and grasshoppers. They are opportunistic hunters and, therefore, survivors.

Typically, no nest is built. The two to four round, white eggs simply occupy an empty cavity, and the single annual clutch takes 28-33 days to incubate. Unlike our bluebirds, which lay their entire clutch of eggs before beginning to incubate, owls will begin to incubate their eggs immediately after the first egg is laid. Therefore, should you see a brood of owlets, they are of all different sizes. If the prey is abundant, all will fledge. A paucity of food leads to survival of the fittest, which is usually the largest and first-hatched. Unable to fly, even after four weeks in the cavity, the owlets emerge by using their talons and beaks and sit along branches and become known as "branchers"! The young fledge at 35-40 days, and once they molt out of their down there is no visual difference between the adult's and juvenile's plumage.



Barred Owl  
(Photo © Copyright Don Getty)

[See page 4.]

**Promoting bluebirds and other cavity nesters**

# The Bird Box

Issue 9.3

Newsletter of the  
**Virginia Bluebird Society**  
www.virginiabluebirds.org

Our **e-mail address** is:  
vbs@virginiabluebirds.org  
If you have a new e-mail address, or have recently changed it, please let us know.

**Anne Little**, President  
(h) 540-373-4594  
e-mail: thegate@cox.net

**Beth Elkins**, Vice President  
(h) 540-374-5053  
e-mail: beth\_elkins@yahoo.com

**Carmen Bishop**, Vice President  
(h) 703-764-9268  
e-mail: cjbish@aol.com

**David Mitchell**, Treasurer  
(h) 540-822-4553  
e-mail: mitchelldf@donttaptheglass.com

**Janet Locklear**, Secretary  
(h) 540-338-5283  
e-mail: jlocklear@starmail.com

## Directors

**Helen Ellis**, (h) 703-743-1642  
e-mail: hedi143@aol.com

**Julie Kutruff**, (h) 703-339-5218  
e-mail: JKutruff@aol.com

**Nan LaRue**, (h) 757-877-9415  
e-mail: nan.larue@cox.net

**Steve Living**, (h) 757-465-6868  
e-mail: Stephen.Living@dgif.virginia.gov

**Earl Morris**, (h) 540-776-1640  
e-mail: emorris@ntelos.net

**Brian Swanson**, (h) 703-743-5220  
e-mail: bcswanson@comcast.net

## State County Coordinator

**Barbara Chambers**, (h) 703-978-6609  
e-mail: bj.chambers@cox.net

## Data Collector

**Charlie Chambers**, (h) 703-978-6609  
e-mail: ce.chambers@cox.net

## Bird Box Co-Editors

**Sarah McDade**, (h) 703-560-9899  
e-mail: sarahmcdade@aol.com

**Bob Sindermann**, (h) 703-243-0796  
e-mail: sinderbob@yahoo.com

**We welcome your written items and artwork**  
(photos and drawings) for *The Bird Box*!  
Send your materials by e-mail or on diskette to  
Sarah or Bob.

## November Board Meeting Highlights

At its meeting in Roanoke on November 3, the VBS Board welcomed three new members: Earl Morris of Roanoke, Carmen Bishop of Fairfax County, and Janet Locklear of Loudoun County. Anne Little reported that VBS has 445 members. Barbara Chambers reported that 30 counties now have coordinators. Charlie Chambers reported that 9,000 bluebirds fledged in 2,953 boxes. Trail leaders were late reporting nest box data to him for 2007. He stated that the number of nest boxes for 2007 might exceed 3,200.

Carl Little gave a demonstration to the board of a new database being developed to better track our members. It may be ready to use by this spring.

We need volunteers to work at fairs and festivals. VBS is trying to determine which fairs will be most effective to work at.

In the financial report, income and expenses for 2007 were as follows:

	Budgeted	Actual
Total income	\$7,695	\$8,213
Total expenses	\$6,080	\$5,971

Sarah McDade is looking at enhancing VBS's newsletter with color printing. We reviewed several newsletters from other bluebird organizations for ideas.

## Gregory John Baruffi, 1953-2007

During the evening of December 18, a tragic vehicle accident claimed the life of Northern Shenandoah Audubon President Greg Baruffi. Greg had good friendships with many birding enthusiasts across the state, including VBS members Kaycee Lichliter and David Mitchell.

For four years, Greg put his heart and soul into co-coordinating the Bluebird Trail at Blandy Experimental Farm at the State Arboretum. The tremendous amount of time and energy this conservation research mission consumed was just a glimpse at his involvement with one of many environmental projects. He became highly skilled at songbird banding, having participated at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, Environmental Studies at Airlie, Blandy Experimental Farm, and Powdermill Nature Reserve banding stations. As a teacher, Greg was highly respected by his students at Timber Ridge School near Winchester. An innovative and enthusiastic carpenter, he built houses for songbirds, bats, woodpeckers, and owls. Greg's enthusiastic and dedicated contributions to his environmental community have left an enduring legacy.



## Good Times and Enlightenment

**A** packed room of VBS members thoroughly enjoyed every moment of a wide variety of bluebird presentations at the annual meeting held in Roanoke on November 3. Vickie Fuquay of Danville explained the process and displayed the wares she uses in her highly successful Adopt-a-Box program. Earl Morris of Roanoke had the audience transfixed by his demonstration of how he gives public talks on bluebirds and monitoring trails.

Awards were given to Vickie Fuquay as County Coordinator of the Year (for Pittsylvania County), Nan LaRue of Newport News as Bluebirder of the Year, and Milly Collela of Nelson County as Volunteer of the Year. The Heritage Award was given to VBS President Anne Little of Fredericksburg for the many years she has unselfishly spent promoting the welfare of bluebirds.

Carl Little of Fredericksburg and Julie Kuttruff of Fairfax County demonstrated the special techniques and materials they use in assembling bluebird boxes, Noel guards, and snake guards. Closing the fascinating program of events was Peggy Spiegel Opengari, who enchanted the audience with a narration of her video of the birds of Giles County.

## Meet Nan LaRue

**C**lyde and I were married in 1958, and from the beginning we were nature lovers. Fed the ducks, birds and other wildlife. Not much money, but we would buy bird seed. We really got turned on when we built our new home and had to take several large trees down. We had the tree company leave about three feet of the trunk to use as a platform feeder. One morning I looked out of the kitchen window and lo and behold there was a Pileated Woodpecker. I grabbed the phone and called Clyde, and told him I had a bird on the tree trunk platform that was crossed with a chicken. That was what really brought it home to us that we were birders. Something we didn't know about. That summer the Pileated Woodpecker continued to take out our tree platform feeder in no time. It was great to watch that close and see the woodpecker that good.

Since my better half was a shipyard manager and later a consultant, we lived lots of places and each time the birds got better. In 1974 we lived in Curacao, a small island off the coast of Venezuela and we began to see different colored birds I hadn't seen before. We didn't know if they were coming or going, since we had just gotten there, I bought a Curacao bird book only to realize that the birds were heading north. Little did I know that they were called warblers. We did a lot of scuba diving in Bonaire and there they had different birds, even though they were only twenty miles south of us. Spent hours in the library trying to find out what the Dutch called them.

When we came back to the states we were sent to Mississippi for nine months. On the Gulf Coast there were tons of neat little birds all over the beach. Hummers like you wouldn't believe, and once again warblers. Our girls were swimmers, so we were all over the state, for swim meets and so many different birds.

In '76 we returned to our native Newport News where I met the then famous Dorothy Mitchell, however at the time I was not able to cultivate the relationship that would develop later.

Once again we moved and this time to Texas and everyone knows how great the birding is there. That's where I saw my first Bluebird. I was in the Stark House Gardens in Orange, Texas, and couldn't believe what I was seeing. They were all over the garden. Since we fed the birds, I couldn't understand why we didn't get any in our yard. [See page 6.]

## Do These People Look Like They're Having a Good Time?

They had a great time on the weekend of the November 3 VBS meeting in Roanoke!



Stopping to admire a scenic view of Roanoke from in front of the Roanoke Star are (left to right): Joe and Sarah McDade of Fairfax, Earl Morris of Roanoke, Nan and Clyde LaRue of Newport News, and Charlie and Barbara Chambers of Annandale.



Nan LaRue of Newport News, all dolled up for something other than monitoring her boxes or attending a VBS Board meeting!



Ollie (above) and Camille (opposite page, bottom)  
(Photos: Helen Ellis)

## It Happens Every Year

In the next few months people will find injured wildlife, and birds that might be injured or appear to be in the wrong place. Now is a good time to acquire your list of licensed rehabilitators throughout Virginia, as it is illegal for non-licensed persons to practice detailed rescue techniques. Acquiring this list now is much better than looking for the information when you have an emergency situation. The “rehabbers” specialize in different categories of animals.

For a good review of what to do if you find a little bird, go to [www.wildlifecenter.org/rescue/baby\\_bird](http://www.wildlifecenter.org/rescue/baby_bird). Reading the message on small birds will bring clarity to procedures. To find licensed rehabilitators in your area, go to [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured/rehabilitators.asp](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured/rehabilitators.asp). You will receive an “area prompt,” and then you can print out the names and phone numbers of those specializing in birds, mammals, and reptiles.

For those of you who do not have computers, you may write to me, include your county name along with your address, and I will send you the information for your area.

– Sarah McDade  
8502 Crestview Drive  
Fairfax VA 22031

## Ollie and Camille

This is a love story. You need to know that from the start. It all began in April 2002, when Helen and John Ellis moved into their new home in Prince William County. The first thing Helen did was to install a bluebird box in the backyard. Within minutes there were tenants – Carolina Chickadees! Helen welcomed them and put up a second box, and sure enough, the bluebirds moved into that one.

Off to a good start! The Chickadees raised six nestlings and fledged them all. The bluebirds, which Helen had named Ollie and Camille, raised three broods that first summer, for a total of 12 fledglings. The first Ollie-bird was most recognizable; his head had an interesting shape, as if he wore a bicycle helmet! However, he did not show up the following spring. Perhaps his successor was one of his sons. At any rate, the name was kept and this Ollie has lasted five years now.

The Camille name has been passed down to a second bluebird as well. A House Sparrow killed the first female in the spring of 2003. But the new Ollie found himself another mate the very same day, and the two of them have been breeding in Helen and John’s backyard right through the summer of 2007. They have been successful, with three broods each season, for a grand total of 62 fledglings.

Helen is definitely in love with her bluebirds, and Ollie and Camille seem to be in love with each other and their chicks. At least this is how Helen sees it, and one does not argue with a woman in love!

Helen began feeding mealworms regularly to Ollie and Camille and their chicks after the successful 2003 season. It is a joyous way to begin each day, she tells us: you go out and whistle up a couple of bluebirds with your coffee! Those birds soon learned to anticipate her. They, and eventually some of their offspring, would be waiting on the porch rail for mealtime. Ollie has, on occasion, eaten from her hand, and Camille will now shyly inch her way closer and touch Helen’s hand with her bill [a bluebird kiss?] before flying away. From this contact, Helen can be sure she is dealing with the same birds each year.

Over the years the adults have brought the summer broods to the porch to be fed. In the winter she has had as many as six bluebirds eating mealworms out of the feeder on her deck. This feeder can also contain “bird kibble” packed with insects and sometimes fruit. These birds know when they have a good thing going; they stay right there! Helen, who is an excellent and involved photographer, has documented it all. You have seen many of Helen’s photos of Ollie and Camille in this newsletter since 2004.

[See next page.]

---

## The Barred Owl (from page 1)

The adult owls care for the fledglings for at least four months, much longer than other owls. The young disperse only a very short distance from where they were fledged (six miles) and there they settle. Pairs mate for life and territories and nest sites are maintained for many years.

Ask a local park ranger where you can locate Barred Owl nesting sites and visit quietly and respectfully, and you will have the thrill of a lifetime. Here in Northern Virginia there are several Barred Owl sites that have remained populated for years. You could also Google “barred owl” and find a wealth of information, including their calls. These birds can live up to 10 years in the wild. The Great Horned Owl is their only natural enemy. Most Barred Owl deaths are related to humans through shootings and automobile collisions. If the owls survive these incidences, animal rehabilitators nurse them back to health. If they are not releasable, they can be used as educational birds. This is one other way you could see a Barred Owl “up close and personal.”

– Barbara Chambers, Fairfax County

## Removing Old Nests

**Q**uestion: If we aren't allow to collect nests or eggs without a permit, are we allowed to remove the old nests from our boxes?

**A**nswer: Yes! Please remove the dirty, used nest. The federal law prohibiting collection was designed to keep humans from collecting viable eggs and active nests of native birds. The eggs that VBS uses for educational purposes are not viable and have been collected from long-abandoned nests. The abandoned nests that VBS displays include chickadee, bluebird, Tree Swallow, House Sparrow and House Wren.

*Do you have a question for the Q&A Column? Send it to Sarah McDade at sarahmcdade@aol.com, or call 703-560-9899.*

---

### Ollie and Camille (from page 4)

In the scorching summer heat, Helen has been known to strap one of those blue frozen ice packs onto the roof of their house. She has not lost one chick to the heat yet! And in the winter she lines the floor of the box with nesting material. If this doesn't meet their "specs," the two birds have been known to take it out and start over. Summer or winter, Ollie and Camille and their families get mealworms and fresh water. I'd stay home too.

Just before the bad storm of 2005, three fledglings had started to come to the porch for mealworms with their parents. After the storm blew a huge tree down in the backyard, Helen saw the adults but not the chicks. Then she noticed that Ollie and Camille were carrying beakfuls of mealworms away with them. It wasn't until the fourth day after the storm that one chick came to the porch feeder with her parents. The fledgling looked as though her wing was injured and her balance was off. The parents fed her and she stayed around through two more broods that summer and well into the fall, until her wing seemed healed and she could take off on her own. Parenting never stops!

This past season it snowed about the time Ollie and Camille were building their first nest. They quit building. By the time the snow was gone and nesting material could be found again, a House Sparrow pair had taken over their box. Being the resourceful birds they are, the two of them found a cavity in a nearby tree. Helen found the nest after the birds began taking beakfuls of mealworms off somewhere. They fledged five in that first brood. Helen installed a "Sparrow Halo" on both her backyard boxes that eliminated the House Sparrow problem forever. Ollie and Camille returned to the box for the next two broods. A Magic Halo is a unique device available on-line; you can "Google" it to see one.

Helen and John Ellis own and operate the Backyard Boutique bird store in Gainesville, Virginia, off Route 29. They carry a huge assortment of bluebird boxes and baffles. They carry mealworms of course, and they sell 18,000 live ones each week, as well as a case of the dried ones. They also sell feeders, birdbaths, books, software, and much more. They even carry nest box cameras!

Helen installed a nest-cam in Ollie and Camille's house last summer! They were able to watch Camille lay eggs and turn them. Then they saw those eggs crack and hatch. They watched as those huge gapes were filled with mealworms and other bird goodies, and saw the chicks grow and fledge.

Helen has recently published "A Bluebird Story" on DVD, showing the nesting-fledging miracle with her photographs and some music and her grandson narrating the entire production. It is a documentary of this love story of Helen's with her bluebirds. It too will be available soon at her store. In these several ways Helen has been able to share her love of these bluebirds, and the knowledge she has picked up along the way, with her customers in Prince William County, and now with all of us. – *Barbara Chambers, Fairfax County*

## Electronic Version Available

To receive *The Bird Box* in PDF format, instead of hard-copy, send a request to [vbs@virginiabluebirds.org](mailto:vbs@virginiabluebirds.org).

## From Other Bluebird Skies

**From Wisconsin:** The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW) reports a record number of bluebirds fledged in 2007: 28,244. BRAW attributes much of this to an increase of total reports: 291 in '07 versus 171 in '06. Also, 1,840 more boxes were included in the tally, for a total of 7,861.

**From New York:** The New York State Bluebird Society's Route 11 Educational Nestbox Trail runs north-south through 10 counties stretching from the St. Lawrence River area to the border of Pennsylvania.

**From Oregon:** Western Bluebird bander and President of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Nancy Fraser reports that a banded female produced 26 eggs and 22 fledglings in 2007. At times the female was building a new nest in a nearby box before the earlier hatchlings had fledged!





"Calling Card" Bluebird in his "Make My Day" pose (above, top) and attacking his image in a pinwheel. (Photos: Roger Mayhorn)

## 'Calling Card' Bluebird

In March 2007 a pair of bluebirds began nesting in one of our yard nest boxes here on Compton Mountain in Buchanan County. The male took a dislike to his image in the mirror of our SUV. He fought his image relentlessly, either in the mirrors or in the windows. My wife and I finally felt sorry for him and covered the mirrors. He continued to fight the windows; we lowered them, so he couldn't see himself. He then went to the back window and fought his image there. When he fought the mirror, he would get so agitated that he would hop up on it and turn and bite himself in the back. Each time he bit himself he leaned backward a little more, until finally he fell from the mirror. He would then fly back up and resume the battle.

We tried putting a plastic owl on top of the vehicle. That didn't bother him in the least. In April we tried taping shiny pinwheels to the mirrors. He saw himself in them and fought them. Even so, he managed to raise two broods of young. In fact, in mid-summer I looked out, and he was fighting the SUV mirror with young ones looking on. He continued to fight his image all summer and into the fall. On November 24, on a frosty, 27-degree morning, he was out there fighting his image.

During the winter we don't see the bluebirds here on the mountain except when there is a break in the weather. The birds go farther down the mountain probably to escape the snow, cold, and wind. However, when there is a warm day, the birds return, and then the aggressive little guy is at it again. He was seen fighting the mirror on December 12, January 9, and February 8.

Just when I thought he had finally given up, I found his "calling card" (droppings) down the passenger door of our Trail Blazer. So it looks like he is just going to pick up this year right where he left off. I am trying to come up with a way, short of completely covering the vehicle, of discouraging him, so he can concentrate on raising his young. I'll let you know if I come up with anything that works.

– Roger Mayhorn, Buchanan County

## NABS Membership Discount

The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is giving discounted memberships to members of its affiliates, such as VBS. VBS members can join NABS for \$15, whether the membership is for an individual or family. Normal rates are \$20 and \$30. For the years 2007 and 2008, \$5 of each of these A-Plus memberships will go to the Zeleny Endowment Fund, a Fund devoted to NABS board-approved programs relating to bluebird conservation, education, and research. Membership includes a subscription to *Bluebird*, a NABS quarterly journal, and an opportunity to attend the annual convention.

To join NABS, go to [www.nabluebirdsociety.org/APlus](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/APlus). Or mail your \$15 membership fee to NABS, P.O. Box 32, Miamiville, OH 45147. Include your mailing address and mention Virginia Bluebird Society and the A-Plus program.

## Meet Nan LaRue (from page 3)

We made several more moves and finally replanted our roots back in Newport News. Even though we don't have any family left here, this will always be home. This is where the birding really began.

I joined Jim Hill at Wild Wings Nature Store in the early '90s and have been there off and on ever since. Jim says I work when I want to, and that is pretty much the game, but it's been lots of fun and a real learning experience. We reacquainted ourselves with Dot Mitchell and from then on, like they say, the rest is history. She took me on a great ride. She introduced me to so many birds and places to bird. Each spring I would take a car full of ladies and bird the mountains. We would start out really neat and tidy, but when you have six ladies that eat and cook well, it didn't take long before we were feeding the crumbs to the birds as we came down the mountain. From Warbler Road to Woodpecker Ridge we saw so many life birds that it never ceased to amaze me, and you would always want to return for more.

Dot would take Jim Hill and myself on bird walks in Deer Park and try to teach us to bird by ear. She had a hearing aid in each ear B could hear our hearts beat B but we couldn't hear the same birds she heard. She would come out with some of the funniest sayings on how the bird sounded, and we would be laughing so hard, we couldn't hear the bird say anything. Jim and I would come back to the store and tell all our customers what a hoot we had that morning and how Dot Mitchell would teach us to remember the bird we were trying to identify. Some days we were so excited about seeing a bird that we would be late opening the store. We sent many customers to Deer Park birding, looking for warblers in the tops of the trees, not on the ground or lower branches.

[See next page.]

---

## Meet Nan LaRue (from page 6)

Birding with the Hampton Roads Bird Club became an experience you would look forward to. We would get up at 3 in the morning, drive in the pitch black dark, down country roads to a spot where you got to see the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW), if you were there before the sun came up. We did that several times. They would tell me that I could not tell anyone where we saw them; they did not have to worry about me. Since I was driving, they would say, turn here, we missed our left turn, it would be so dark and in farm land, there were not any stores or landmarks for me to remember. It was a great journey, and you have to remember this was 20 years ago and we couldn't talk about seeing the RCW. In a couple of years we hope to see them in the Great Dismal Swamp.

We started our first bluebird trail in the Newport News City Park. Actually we took over Dot Mitchell's trail when she went to live with her daughter. Most of her boxes were old, not in great condition and opening from the top which we didn't like. So Jim and I revamped the trail. We now have about 40 boxes all over the park, and plan to do some moving and restoring this spring. We have a problem with people, looking in our boxes and frisbee golf.

Dan Crystal of William and Mary uses all of our boxes for his many Bluebird studies. Last fall while talking to him about Bluebirds, he told me about his study in putting radio transmitters on the backs of Bluebirds, to see how far they migrate and breed. They are also checking the DNA to see how many males mate with different females. We should get him to speak to us again soon, for he is truly doing great work in the field of Bluebirds.

In the late '90s the Department of Game and Inland Fishery (DGIF) sent five of us to bird camp. What a blast we had and such fun. We were up by 5:30 am, moving nets in neck high weeds and thickets, catching birds, learning to band them, taking down nets and moving them again. We had classes from sun up to sun down and the midnight oil did burn. Don Froehlich is a great teacher and friend. It has become a week Jerri Howe and I will never forget.

Jerri and I were asked to join Don Schwab's MAPS program in the Great Dismal Swamp. We call Don our "guru," for he has become a mentor and teacher. Many years ago Don set up the MAPS program in the swamp, one of the first MAPS stations in Virginia. I believe it's about 20 years old. Jerri and I try to get in the swamp about 5a.m., get the nets open, and set up. That way we can try to leave about 11a.m.

The Great Dismal Swamp is rather warm in the spring and summer, and the humidity is *high*. We wear shorts, and cover with bug spray. Most of the time we do not get bitten, but the bugs are bad and the May flies are worse – and yes it's fun! Don has introduced us to so many phases of nature, including butterflies and frogs. As the sun rises and the swamp dries out, the butterflies steal the show. We have seen bear, fox, otter, deer, and all kinds of birds here.

Several years ago I received a grant from DGIF for poles and baffles for my trail, which I have shared with my bluebird trail friends. Jeff Trollinger, of DGIF, came on board as a friend. He shared many valuable insights.

Jim and I have more bluebird trails in the area and will continue to support them and make new ones. Working closely with the Hampton Roads Bird Club, I hope to train more monitors for more trails in the near future.

Bluebirds truly carry the sky on their backs. Last week we had about seven at the fountain on the back deck. I can't get them to nest in our yard. I feed too heavily, and they like to be off to themselves. However, I have bluebird boxes all around our neighborhood. Now our neighbors see and know what bluebirds are.

*[Editors note: Nan serves on the VBS board, and personally monitors 60 boxes. She is county coordinator for Hampton, Newport News and York Counties.]*

## Thank You to the Swansons

VBS gives *mega-thanks* to Gainesville residents Brian and Marci Swanson for taking VBS displays, materials, and knowledge to no fewer than seven bird and garden festivals in Virginia, West Virginia, and Georgia during 2007!

## Reminder: The Law

Federal law forbids the removal of eggs, nests, or hatchlings of native birds. Since the House Sparrow is an alien species and not federally protected, it is legal to remove their nests and eggs and to capture and kill adult birds.

## VBS Permit for Display Boxes

Federal and state laws prohibit the collection of birds, nests, or eggs without a permit. Groups such as VBS that wish to collect nests or unhatched eggs for educational display purposes must have a permit, which is issued by the state.

VBS has a permit that names the organization's officers, board members, and county coordinators. A copy of this permit must accompany anyone setting up a display of nests for educational purposes. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries officials have asked to see our permit at various events.

VBS must renew its permit every two years. For that renewal, we are required to submit information on the numbers and types of eggs and nests we have in our possession. If you have developed a set of display boxes for your area, or would like to, contact Anne Little for proper procedures.

– Julie Kutruff

## Visit Our Web Site

The VBS Web site offers nest box plans, trail monitoring protocol, trail data forms, news, and links to other useful sites:

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

## How to Join Us

Send your name, address, phone number, and/or e-mail address along with a check for \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a family to:

**Virginia Bluebird Society**  
726 William Street  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Membership forms can be downloaded from the VBS Web site:

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

## Tax Deductible

VBS is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

## Gifts to VBS

VBS would like to thank the following for sponsoring a bluebird nestbox in 2007. With their donations we were able to place more nest boxes on public lands, school yards and parks.

William Carmines	Jeannie Gilman	Veronica Perez
D.J. Donohue	Paula Kallay	Joan Ragland
Theodosia Evans	Carol M. Kovalick	Thomas and Barbara Segar
Joe and Glenys Gardner	Stella Lindsey	Susan Smith
Philip Gbur		

VBS also recognizes the following persons who gave gift memberships for birthdays, Christmas, or as "thank-yous." By giving the gift of bluebird membership, we help increase our presence in Virginia and help those interested in bluebirds find a community of like-minded individuals.

Barbara and Charlie Chambers: 6 gift memberships	Carol Catron
Ron and Priscilla Kingston: 3 gift memberships	David Dorsey
Marietta Beverage	Terry and Janet Duckworth
Susan Bradshaw	Tina Hall
Christine Boran	Patti Wiggins
Donald Carl	Pat Holland
	Carol Pruner
	Edwin Robertson



Virginia Bluebird Society  
726 William Street  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

**DATED  
MATERIAL**