

1992

## News, Notes, Comments

North American Bird Bander

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# News, Notes, Comments

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## Comment on "Bluebird Box Predator Guard" (See NABB 16:3, p. 75)

Jim Noel of Ashland, IL, first described what is now called the Noel Guard some years ago. When well soldered and securely fashioned to the sides of the bluebird nest box door, it has proved to work well. A recent adaptation of it, with Mr. Noel's approval, incorporates an extra piece of wood to which the guard is secured, and this wood, in turn, is screwed to the door, which simplifies attachment and also is easily transferred.

However, one caution should be taken: when the two end pieces (2" and 1½") meet as the guard is folded, unless the wires are exactly flush, the small gap can cause a bird's foot to become entangled. This connecting seam should be on the top of the guard as applied to the door instead of on the "floor" as the bird enters the box.

The guard should be of heavy galvanized hardware cloth as well as securely fastened and, preferably, soldered. Raccoons are very strong!

**Dorene H. Scriven**  
Bluebird Recovery Program

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## REQUESTS FOR REPRINTS ON OWLS

Authors of articles or publications dealing with owls and wishing them to be listed in the second edition of a Working Bibliography of Owls of the World are asked to send reprints to:

**Richard J. Clark**  
The Owl Bibliography  
c/o Department of Biology  
York College of Pennsylvania  
York, PA USA 17405-7199

## BARN OWL NEST RELOCATED SUCCESSFULLY ON NANTUCKET

On 21 April 1991, a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) was found nesting in a small house on a barge moored in the middle of Polpis Harbor. There were several eggs and two young. The owner of the barge was anxious to move in, so we arranged to place a nest box on shore.

On 10 May, we transferred four owlets and two eggs to the nest box. As we were about to leave, the owner of the houseboat went on board to start cleaning and discovered an adult owl under the bed. It was captured and found to be a female wearing band #987-35569. After taking measurements, we place her in the box with the nestlings, where she stayed. A month later we returned and banded four owlets, all in good health.

On checking the band number, it was found that this owl was banded by me 15 October 1989, one of seven nestlings in a box located about six miles away from Polpis Harbor.

**Edith Andrews**  
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## Cornell Ornithologists Warn Against Antifreeze Chemical in Bird Baths

Mixing glycerine with water in winter bird baths could harm the birds that drink and bathe in the water warn experts at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Furthermore, the risky practice is not particularly effective for lowering the freezing point of water, the ornithologists found, and they recommend electric heaters instead.

"There's no question that birds need help finding liquid water in the winter when their natural water sources freeze," says Todd Culver, the Lab's Educa-

tion Specialist. "Bird baths that don't freeze are a good supplement to feeders for attracting birds."

However, recent articles in magazines and newspapers around the country have recommended using glycerine, an alcohol-like chemical, as a bird-bath antifreeze. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has responded to dozens of inquiries from concerned bird watchers.

The Cornell ornithologists conducted experiments and consulted with wildlife veterinarians. They found two problems with using glycerine in bird baths:

--"Rather large concentrations of glycerine must be used to prevent a water bath from freezing," says Gregory Butcher, director of the Lab's Bird Population Studies Program. "In order to lower the freezing point to 15 degrees Fahrenheit, for example, you need a 30% glycerine solution," he said of the chemical, which is a low-level toxin and has a sweet taste. "Birds that ingest large amounts of the substance will experience elevated blood sugar levels, causing hyperglycemia and possibly death."

--"Many birds bathe and preen themselves in cold weather," says Culver. "If you use enough glycerine to prevent the water from freezing, it causes the feathers to mat. Birds bathe and preen to enhance the insulation value of their feathers. Matted feathers are poor insulators and can be fatal in cold temperatures."

A better solution to the frozen bird bath problem is an electric immersion-style heater, which costs only pennies per day to operate, the Cornell ornithologists recommend.

More information on providing a watering hole is available by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, EIS Dept. N4, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.



## 1992 NABS RESEARCH AWARDS

The North American Bluebird Society is pleased to announce the presentation of the ninth annual research grant awards. The 1992 recipients are as follows:

### BLUEBIRD GRANT

**Dr. Wayne Davis**, University of Kentucky

Topic: A Better Bluebird Box

### STUDENT GRANTS

**John P. McCarty**, Cornell University

Topic: The Impact of Environmental Variability on the Reproductive Success of the Tree Swallow

**Janice Simpkin**, University of Nevada, Reno

Topic: Re-establishment of a Bluebird Metapopulation in Central Nevada and Dispersal Dynamics within the Metapopulation

**Neil Niemuth**, University of Wyoming

Topic: Tracking of Microtine Rodent Populations by Breeding Saw-whet Owls

### GENERAL GRANTS

**Drs. E. Dale Kennedy and Douglas W. White**, Kansas State University

Topic: Effects of Nest Box Size and Microclimate on Breeding Success of Bewick's Wrens

**Brad Semel**, McGraw Wildlife Foundation

Topic: The Ecology of Brood Parasitism in the Wood Duck

**Charlotte C. Cockran**, Northwest Ecological Research Institute

Topic: Reproductive Success of Western and Mountain Blue-birds in Grasshopper Control Areas, and Potential for Using Blue-birds to Control Grasshopper Densities

**Rick Baetsen**, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Topic: Breeding Biology and Habitat Requirements of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in Northern Michigan by Surveying Methods and an Artificial Nestbox Program

## **NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY RESEARCH GRANTS - 1993**

The North American Bluebird Society announces the tenth annual grants in aid for ornithological research directed toward cavity nesting species of North America with emphasis on the genus *Sialia*. Presently, three grants of single or multiple awards are awarded and include:

### **Bluebird Research Grant**

Available to student, professional or individual researcher for a research project focused on any of the three species of bluebird in the genus *Sialia*.

### **General Research Grant**

Available to student, professional, or individual researchers for a research project focused on any North American cavity nesting species.

### **Student Research Grant**

Available to full-time college or university students for a research project focused on any North American cavity nesting species.

Further guidelines and application materials are available upon request from:

**Kevin L. Berner**  
**Research Committee Chairman**  
**College of Agriculture and Technology**  
**State University of New York**  
**Cobleskill, New York 12043**

Complete applications must be received by 1 December 1992; funding decisions will be announced by 15 January 1993.



## **REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE**

The Eastern Bird Banding Association invites all licensed banders and their subpermittees to participate in OPERATION WING CHORD, a cooperative banding project during 1992-93 to test the hypothesis that the sex of birds of species considered sexually monomorphic is correlated with wing chord. This project is endorsed by the Bird Banding Laboratory. The species to be studied are: Blue Jay, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Waterthrush, Northern Mockingbird, Wood Thrush, and Veery.

Banders will collect data on birds of known sex from existing files as well as from current banding activity and report their information to EBBA coordinators. A large data base is needed for the investigation of this hypothesis. Data now buried in banders' files can be of great value to this study.

For information, instructions, and reporting forms, send name, address, and banding permit number along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Susannah K. Graedel, 3 Talmage Road, Mendham, New Jersey 07945.

