



Chirp 'n Chatter News

Chirp 'n Chatter, Tega Cay Village Shopping Center, Fort Mill, SC

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Getting Started with Bluebirds

Over the years land has been cleared for housing and industrial developments, shopping malls, highways, and cropland; many old trees have been cut down for firewood. Wooden fence posts that provided nesting cavities have now been replaced with metal posts. With modernization, the supply of natural nesting cavities for bluebirds and other native cavity nesters has been greatly reduced.

Compounding the problem of habitat loss has been the introduction into North America of two imported species – the House Sparrow and the European Starling. Both starlings and sparrows are cavity nesters, and both are very aggressive. House Sparrows are small enough to enter any hole that a bluebird can, and are so aggressive they will chase away the more timid bluebird. Starlings can be excluded from bluebird boxes by using the correct size of entrance hole, but will out compete bluebirds for woodpecker holes and other natural nesting cavities.

During the summer, bluebirds feed mainly on insects. In the winter, bluebirds depend on many kinds of wild berries for their food supply. However, the supply of wild berries has also decreased over the years. The few berries that remain are often stripped quickly by large flocks of starlings.

Even though the bluebird population has greatly decreased, the future can still be promising for them. The most important step we can take to help bring back the bluebird is to provide nesting sites by setting out a bluebird box or starting a bluebird trail. A

bluebird trail is a series of bluebird boxes placed along a prescribed route. In areas where nesting boxes have been put up in suitable habitat, bluebird populations are increasing. Bluebirding is a great environmental, hands-on project that people of all ages can enjoy. By following the instructions below, chances are good that you will be able to attract and enjoy bluebirds.



The Bluebird Box

- ? A good bluebird box should be well ventilated, watertight, have drainage holes, be easy to monitor, and easy to clean.
- ? Cedar and redwood are ideal, although plywood and other types of wood can be used. Boxes can be painted or stained if a light color is used.
- ? Treated lumber should not be used because of its toxic content.
- ? A bluebird box should never have a perch. Sparrows and wrens are attracted to perches.
- ? Boxes for Eastern bluebirds should have an entrance hole of 1 1/2 inches.

Mounting the Bluebird Box

- ? Smooth round pipe is probably the best and simplest mounting system to use – 3/4 inch electrical conduit works well, but any smooth round pipe will also work;
- ? Coating the pole with grease will also help to keep predators off the box.
- ? Hardware cloth placed under a box helps to prevent snake predation.
- ? Avoid mounting your bluebird box on a fence line or on trees. Raccoons are known to walk fence lines and climb trees and may find your boxes.

Monitoring Your Bluebird Box

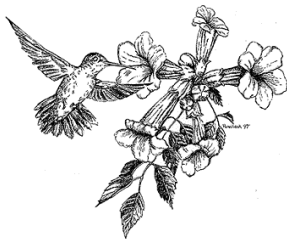
- ? Check your bluebird box at least once a week during the nesting season, until chicks are close to fledging.
- ? Do not open the box after the nestlings are 12-14 days old. Doing so could result in the nestlings leaving the box before they are able to fly, greatly reducing their chance of survival.
- ? Always remove House Sparrow nests immediately.
- ? Bluebirds usually nest in late March or early April, depending on the weather conditions. In our area, where bluebirds reside year round, nesting may occur earlier.
- ? Bluebirds usually have two broods per season, but three broods are possible.
- ? Recognize a bluebird nest – It is a cup-shaped nest that is usually made up of woven grass and pine needles. (continued on page 2)

Getting Started (continued)

- ? Bluebirds usually lay 4 to 5 light blue eggs, but may lay as many as 6 or 7. A small percentage of their eggs may be white.
- ? The incubation period for bluebird eggs is 12 to 14 days.
- ? The nestlings remain in the nest 18 to 21 days before they fledge.
- ? Remove bluebird nests and those of other birds as soon as the young birds have fledged.
- ? Thoroughly clean the nest box.

This information has been reprinted from a "Fact Sheet" provided by the North American Bluebird Society with permission.

Bluebird Nestbox Package
10% Off
REGULARLY \$69.96
Offer good through June 30, 2001



WHAT TO DO WITH A BABY BIRD

Beginning in the late spring, people may encounter unexpected babies in the neighborhood. In this case, we're talking about bird babies found out of their nests.

Please remember that these birds may not be orphaned or may have been abandoned for a reason. Although they look forlorn and like they haven't had a square meal in days, they probably are being attended to by the parents and are okay.

The Chesapeake Wildlife Sanctuary in Maryland advises that if a baby bird is without feathers and cannot move around freely, it should be put back in the nest. It is *not true* that if a human touches it, its mother will desert or destroy it.

If the nest has fallen to the ground, secure it in the tree or shrub. If it is destroyed, make a new one out of a margarine tub by poking a couple of holes in the bottom for rain drainage, tying three or four strings around the rim and securing it close to the original nest site. If part of the original nest is available, line the new one with it.

All birds with the exception of English sparrows, European starlings and pigeons are protected by the Migratory Treaty Act of 1918. It was amended in 1978 to include birds of prey. The only exceptions to this rule are game birds during the various hunting seasons. Under this act, it is illegal to keep any wild bird for more than a few hours.

Please contact us at 803/802-6677 for help locating a wild bird rehabilitator to care for an abandoned or injured bird.

This information was extracted from "Entering Rehab" by Katherine Orton which appeared in the March-April, 2001 issue of The Bird's-Eye reView and is reprinted with permission from the National Bird-Feeding Society.

Feeding Hummingbirds: How to Provide a Plentiful Supply of Their "Favorite Food"

Attracting hummingbirds to your yard, garden or window is not difficult. The natural diet of hummers is flower nectar, tree sap and small insects and spiders that are often captured in or near flowers. This natural diet can be supplemented by hummingbird feeders which dispense a sugar water solution. Flowers blooming through the season, however, are needed when hummingbirds are present to attract them and to provide the natural foods required for a complete diet. *Table 1* lists some recommended plants that can provide a variety of flowers for hummers when they are present in your neighborhood. In maintaining flowering plants, it's best to avoid insecticide use around the flowers, because hummingbirds depend on small insects as part of their diet.

Nectar Feeding

Commercial nectar solutions are available or a nectar solution can be made by mixing one part granulated sugar with four parts water. For example, mix 1 cup sugar with 4 cups water. Boil the water and dissolve the sugar. Allow the mixture to cool before filling your feeder. Keep leftover portions in the refrigerator until needed. Clean the feeder and refill every few days, more in hot weather.

Feeders can be cleaned by rinsing with hot water, filling with vinegar and uncooked rice and shaking vigorously, or soaking the feeder in a solution of two ounces of household bleach mixed with one gallon of water. Use a brush to clean feeding ports.

When selecting a hummingbird feeder, look for one that's easy to fill and clean and without too many nooks and crannies. Some red on the feeder is desirable because it seems to attract hummingbirds. Hang the feeder, preferably in partial shade, out of the wind and in an area that is easy to view. Consider using more than one feeder to prevent an aggressive male from dominating the feeder. Place the second feeder out of sight of the first and in an area that is easily observed. Hang your feeder in early April in time for early arrivals and continue until fall migration is complete.

Hummers (continued)

More Tips

Avoid honey mixtures for feeding because there is increased potential for spoilage and harmful molds. Red food coloring is not necessary; the red tip or plastic flower on your feeder is sufficient to attract the hummers. If your feeder has no red, you can add a dab of red nail polish near the feeding ports or add a red ribbon to the feeder. To deter ants, add an ant moat or chemical ant guard.



See our wide selection of hummingbird feeders

Table 1. Planting for Hummingbirds

Plants	Exposure	Flowering Time
Rose-of-Sharon	Full sun to partial shade	Late summer to early fall
American columbine	Full sun to partial shade	Late spring early summer
Bee balm	Full sun	Summer
Blazing stars	Full sun or light shade	Midsummer to late fall
Butterfly-bush	Full sun	Early summer
Clematis	East exposure; sun	Early summer
Coral bells	Sun to partial shade	Late spring
Daylily	Sun to partial shade	Late spring to summer
Foxglove	Semi-shade	Spring
Garden phlox	Sun	Summer
Gladiolas	Sun	Summer
Hardy fuchsia	Morning sun	Summer, fall
Hollyhock	Sun	Summer, fall
Honeysuckle trumpet	Sun to shade	Spring; sparsely thereafter
Hosta	Semi-shade	Early to late summer
Moss pink	Full sun	Early spring
Nasturtium	Sun; avoid hot sites	Summer, fall
Penstemon	Sun	Spring to summer
Petunia	Full sun	Summer to frost
Salvia or sage	Sun to light shade	Spring to frost
Flowering tobacco	Full sun to partial shade	Summer, fall
Scarlet runner pole bean	Sun	Summer
Scarlet trumpet creeper	Sun	Summer
Wild blue phlox	Shade	Spring
Zinnias	Full sun	Summer, fall

MANAGING SQUIRRELS

Feeding birds is a most enjoyable backyard activity, but there is one aspect that can fill even the most mild-mannered person with rage: squirrels! If you're ready to pull out all the stops, there are plenty of weapons on the market.

Thanks to technology and some inspired inventors, feeders are designed specifically to (perhaps) stop squirrels in their tracks. The arsenal includes weight balanced feeders such as the "Yankee Flipper", manufactured by Droll Yankee and the "Absolute Feeder" by Heritage Farms and caged feeders by Droll Yankee and others.

For those who aren't ready to give up their existing feeders, adding stovepipe baffles and metal or plastic shields will help protect your old favorites. Using a baffle when you mount or hang a feeder stops animals that climb up or down (raccoons, squirrels and possums) before they reach your feeders. Properly positioned, baffles exclude the unwanted without interfering with the function of the feeding station.

A useful squirrel guard that has a tilting baffle made of clear plastic comes with hardware for suspending a feeder. Stovepipe baffles attached to a pole beneath the feeders work well as long as your pole is six feet high.

Of course, some people say if you can't beat the pesky critters, join 'em – the concept behind feeders and food made for four-footed visitors.

Being both inquisitive and playful, squirrels seem to love the challenges of the various gizmos that people use. Available are squirrel swings, squirrel munch boxes, squirrel dinettes, and the Squngee. The squirrels' only concern seems to be, once they've finished one ear of corn, that another be installed in its place.



Chuck-a-Nut feeder filled with Wildlife Blend

One very effective method of changing squirrel behavior is replacing the sunflower seed (or mixture) in your feeders with safflower seed and installing a squirrel feeder at some distance from your birdfeeders. Once the squirrels are established in their new area, you can switch back to your preferred seed mixture.

Any Squirrel Feeder

10% Off

With coupon

Expiration Date: July 5, 2001

Any "Squirrel Proof" Birdfeeder

10% Off

With coupon

Expiration Date: July 5, 2001

Upcoming Events

Children's Program

A two hour program for children 6-10.
We'll learn about birds and build a birdhouse.
Tuesday, July 24 and 31.
9:00 AM. Registration required.

Saturday Bird Walks

July 7 and 21. August 4 and 18. Meet at the store at 7:30 AM. Bring your binoculars or scope. (Loaners are available) We'll return about 10:00.

Saturday, June 30

A Guided Field Trip to Hilton Pond Center led by Bill Hilton, Jr. Have your hummingbird questions ready for Bill, who is one of a handful of active hummingbird banders. Space is limited. Registration is required.

Recipes for the Birds from The National Bird-Feeding Society

Birdie Granola Bar

1/2 cup chopped rendered suet
1/2 cup peanut butter
2-1/2 cups corn meal
1 cup mixed bird seed

Combine ingredients and press into a pan. Freeze until firm. Crumble. Mix the crumbles with some peanuts, birdseed, chopped apples, raisins and more chunks of suet. Divide into single-serving containers and freeze.

Birdie Cookie Dough

1 cup flour
1 cup shortening
1 cup peanut butter
4 cups corn meal

Mix everything together as you would cookie dough and store in refrigerator. Serve by packing into suet feeder.

Chirp 'n Chatter

721 Crossroads Plaza
Fort Mill, SC 29715

Many of us are using the Internet as a resource for all kinds of information. Here are some websites that you will find interesting and informative.

National Bird-Feeding Society

www.birdfeeding.org

North American Bluebird Society

www.nabluebirdsociety.org

Operation Ruby Throat

www.rubythroat.org

Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History

www.hiltonpond.org

National Audubon Society

www.audubon.com

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

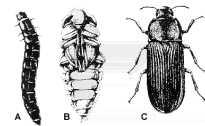
www.birds.cornell.edu

American Birding Association

www.americanbirding.org

Did you know?

Mealworms are not worms at all but the larval form of the darkling beetle. They are clean, easy to raise, do not carry human diseases and, most importantly, are a nutritious food supplement readily accepted by bluebirds.



Contact Us

Contact us with your questions, comments, or concerns at:

Phone: 803/802-6677

Fax: 803/802-5062

E-mail: Chirpnchatter@aol.com

We look forward to hearing from you.

Dave & Marion Davenport, Owners