

Winter 2008/2009

January 2009



# The Fledgling

The official Newsletter of the Missouri Bluebird Society



The Missouri Bluebird Society is an Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

## Offering Food for Bluebirds in Winter by Regina Garr

Seems everyone has a favorite recipe for making "bluebird food"! Truly, there has to be **hundreds** of versions out there. Visit the NABS Affiliate web pages, check out the recipes on [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org), and refer to any one of dozens of books about bluebirds, and within minutes you will have more recipes than you could ever hope to prepare. It is fun, though, to try new food recipes for the bluebirds. A bonus to offering food for bluebirds is having the opportunity to see the many other birds that will be attracted to the same type of food. Winter is a good time to experiment with some new recipes. Here are a couple of suggestions that you may want to try...and, of course, feel free to embellish these!

### Fruit Mixtures for "Frugivores":

In his book *Birds in Missouri*, Brad Jacobs mentions that birds that eat fruit (frugivores) can be offered mixtures of fruit in a pan of cornmeal mush. He lists the following fruits/berries and good choices: **currants, cranberries, blueberries, or grapes**. Brad also points out that in February & March, the few natural fruit options that remain on plants can be critically important to spring migrants. (so plant some native berry-producing plants!)

Brad Jacobs book is available through the Missouri Department of Conservation Nature Shop : [www.mdcnatureshop.com](http://www.mdcnatureshop.com) or by calling 800-521-8632.

### Winter Pudding Recipe

(North Carolina Bluebird Society)

- 2 Quarts water
- 1 Cup margarine
- 4 Cups grits ( not instant)
- 1 Cup peanut butter
- Raisins & peanut hearts

In a large sauce pan , bring water and margarine to a boil. Slowly add grits, stirring and cooking until mixture begins to thicken. Remove from heat and add peanut butter, raisins, and peanut hearts. Mix well.

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**MOBS**

**PO BOX 105830**

**Jefferson City, MO**

**65110**

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

*Remember to check your mailing label for your Membership Expiration.*

*If there is no expiration noted on your label, you have been sent a courtesy newsletter.*

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## Bluebird "Winter Needs"

*By Steve Garr /Photos by Steve Garr*

Most of us in Missouri are fortunate to have Bluebirds as year-round residents. They do not really "migrate" but will sometimes relocate to areas within just a mile or two of their nesting territory to find food, water, or shelter. Of course, if those needs are met in the area they nested in, then they are often happy to winter in the same location.

In addition to landscaping with plants that provide berries for the bluebirds, offering them mealworms or suet-type products or even sunflower meats or hearts can be a real draw in cold winter weather. Sometimes, the natural berries and fruits can become completely encased in ice and not available to the bluebirds. That is when Bluebirds will often get inquisitive about alternative food sources.

Still, it is a great idea to plant trees & shrubs that are attractive to Bluebirds as a food source. A few I would suggest are:

- Hackberry ( *Celtis occidentalis*)
- American Beautyberry ( *Callicarpa Americana*)
- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) *sometimes considered slightly invasive*
- Eastern Red Cedar ( *Juniperus virginiana*)
- Staghorn Sumac ( *Rhus typhina*) *sometimes considered slightly invasive*
- Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

In order for Bluebirds ( and other birds) to survive through the winter, they need to find food, water, and shelter. Of these, I would consider food and water the most important elements to add to a habitat during the average Missouri winter, with the addition of safe shelter becoming important during severe conditions with freezing rain, blowing snow, and extreme cold.

Water can be provided by using bird bath heaters, heated baths, or by providing fresh water daily, or several times per day. As for shelter, "winterizing" your Bluebird nest boxes for cold weather is usually sufficient. Where Bluebird winter populations are quite high, you might consider adding a "roosting box" to your habitat that is capable of housing greater numbers of roosting Bluebirds.

Below are photos of a roosting box I have used for several years. It is only one of many good styles available.



Left: Winter roosting box  
outside dimensions: 9" Wide x  
7 1/4" High x 15 1/2" Long

**I recommend :**

- **at least a 3" roof overhang on the front of the box**
- **Face entrance hole away from prevailing winds**

Right: Inside of roosting box  
Interior "divider /perch": 2"  
High and the length of the box



## Saving the nest site of a “Primary Cavity –Nester”!

by Regina Garr  
Photos by Steve Garr



There is a great deal to be said for just paying attention to what’s going on around you. And for taking the time to follow up and make a difference! That is exactly what took place last spring when two dedicated nature enthusiasts noticed a neighbor removing a tree from their yard.

Scott & Wendy O’Kelly live in a fairly typical suburban neighborhood in Jefferson City, Missouri. Well, typical except for the fact that **Red-headed Woodpeckers** had excavated a nest site in a tree in one of the neighborhood yards and had begun to nest!

Now while most of our other North American Woodpecker species are either increasing in populations or at least stable, Red-headed woodpeckers have seen a dramatic population decrease in the past several decades. The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery group, [redheadrecovery.org](http://redheadrecovery.org), states that numbers have declined by 90% in the last 40 years!

When the O’Kelleys noticed that their neighbor was removing this tree, Scott convinced the home owner to at least leave the portion of the tree that had the nest in place.

The home owners agreed and many of us in Jefferson City were afforded the opportunity to view these beautiful birds at work feeding and guarding their young. Later, after the babies had fledged, and the tree was going to be completely removed, Scott and Wendy requested the portion of the tree that contained the “cavity”. They retrieved an approx. 12” x 12” x 16” hunk of tree which they brought to Steve Garr for advice on how to fashion it into a post-mounted “natural” cavity for the woodpeckers. It will be interesting to see what the three of them come up with! Woodpeckers have been known to utilize “pre-excavated” nest sites if the cavity is filled with shavings and the woodpecker is allowed to re-excavate it. And in some cases, they have been known to nest in cavities with out doing any excavating of their own. Much depends on available nesting options.



While the population figures for the Red-headed species may seem to paint a hopeless situation, the Red-headed Recovery organization is positive and states that this decline can easily be reversed by changing how we manage landscapes. They give the following advice:

**“The key is to provide the habitat that the Red-Head needs. Areas are needed with:**

- **Large trees**
- **A park-like low density of trees**
- **An open understory**
- **Good number of mast trees, producing nuts and acorns. Oaks, hickory, beech.**
- **Good availability of trees with dead limbs or dead trees. That is, "wildlife trees".**

**It becomes clear why this species was once considered "almost domestic". These requirements perfectly describe cities, open parklands and golf courses.”**

And of course everyone can help by becoming informed and teaching others about the habitat needs of the Red-headed Woodpeckers. They also encourage you to report breeding “clusters” of Red-headed Woodpeckers to : [www.redheadrecovery.org](http://www.redheadrecovery.org).

Mailing Address : Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis/ Red-Headed Woodpecker Recovery/  
PO Box 3801/ Minneapolis, MN 55403-0801



## Missouri Bluebird Society Nest Box Grant Program

The Missouri Bluebird Society is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to conservation of bluebirds and other native cavity nesting songbirds, and to educational projects that would be of benefit to these native birds. A limited number of nest boxes each year will be awarded to assist in projects that help promote the objective of the Missouri Bluebird Society (MOBS). These projects must include establishing and enhancing nest box trails on public lands within the state of Missouri, and have as one of its goals the education of the local community about Bluebirds and other native Cavity Nesting Species. These grants start at five sets of nest boxes and poles per grant, on a “matching basis”, with MOBS providing five nest box/pole sets when applicant provides an equal number of nest box/ pole sets. Whether or not the matching box requirement can be met by refurbishing existing boxes on an established trail will be at the discretion of the MOBS Board of Directors. Further, applicants must agree to the following provisions:

1. Applicant’s nest boxes must be constructed in a fashion and design recommended and approved by MOBS.
2. Trail Location must be approved by MOBS.
3. The applicant agrees to present a 15-30 minute program to their organization or another community organization about bluebirds and other native cavity –nesting birds and the need for monitored bluebird trails. MOBS will assist in providing materials for this presentation.
4. The applicant agrees to take responsibility for seeing that the nest box trail is adequately monitored and agrees to take all necessary precautions and maintenance measures to ensure that non-native species are not allowed to inhabit and reproduce in the nest boxes.
5. The applicant agrees to turn in a completed MOBS nest box monitoring form each year after nesting season reporting nesting activity on the trail.

Applicant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide and attach the following information for review by the MOBS Board of Directors:

1. Applicant’s name, address, county, telephone number, and email address (if any).
2. Name of any organization involved and contact information for the organization.
3. Purpose of the proposed project- particularly if the nest box trail is a part of an existing project that encompasses other goals.
4. Location of the project and description of the habitat of the trail or proposed trail.
5. Description of how the project will be implemented (including a time line).
6. Description of predator control measures that are planned and how they will be implemented.
7. Other sources of funding for the project.
8. Plans and details for the required presentation ( i.e. to whom and when)
9. Please attach a basic description of the “matching box /pole sets” the applicant will provide ( plans or photos are helpful)
10. Number of grant boxes requested.

Please mail this form, along with the above information to:

Missouri Bluebird Society/ PO Box 105830/ Jefferson City, MO 65110

Deadline for Grant Requests is 02/15/2009. Grants will be awarded and notification made after March 15th, 2009. It is the responsibility of grant recipients to make arrangements with MOBS to claim their grant boxes & poles from Jefferson City, MO—MOBS cannot ship or deliver grant nest box/pole sets. Recipients must claim their nest boxes by Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> of 2009.

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

# MOBS Member creates “House Sparrow Trail”

Many MOBS members will remember Ivan Ray Miller from any one of the three previous State Conferences, because he has attended all of them! He has also been a generous contributor to the Raffle & Silent Auction fund-raisers for the Society. Ivan is an experienced Bluebirder, and actually has a great deal of experience with a variety of cavity-nesters. He monitors over 100 nest boxes, in addition to his Purple Martin nest sites (had 121 nesting pair of martins this past season!) He reports that he had Tree Swallows and Prothonatry Warblers in his boxes, as well as Bluebirds of course. Ivan lives in Jamesport, Missouri.

Recently, Ivan sent me a note describing something new he was trying. I will let him tell you about it in his own words:

***“We also did something different this summer. Put up a sparrow trail. Yes, a sparrow trail. We put boxes around farm buildings where they love to be and every 15 to 20 days we do nest checks and destroy the nests and eggs. And every egg destroyed is one less sparrow. Will be interesting to see all our totals at season end”.*** Ivan Ray Miller

So, yes, Ivan we are anxious to hear how that worked out for you! Thanks so much for contributing.

In the last issue of *The Fledgling*, we printed results from our “non-scientific” survey about nest box pests and predators. House Sparrows definitely came out on top as the “greatest problem” with regard to competitors/predators. As we all prepare to ready our nest boxes for another season, it certainly can’t hurt to look into as many options for control as we possibly can. And, as in most things, taking more than a “single-solution” approach to controlling house sparrows (or ants, or snakes, or any other problem on the trail) is probably a good idea.

## House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

What is the real story on this bird? It depends a bit on who you ask. It is agreed that it is a non-native bird to N.A. and that it is certainly very wide-spread. It is an “Old World sparrow”.

The new *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America* has this to say about the House Sparrow:

“They were introduced from Europe in 1840.”

Kaufman says in *Lives of North American Birds*:

“it was first released in New York in 1851”.

Bet Zimmerman states on her website ([sialis.org](http://sialis.org)): “Accounts differ, but it appears that repeated introductions occurred in various parts of the U.S.” **check out Bet’s Historical Account of the House Sparrow on her website at [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org) and then go to the “House sparrow” page and click on History. It is a very interesting account!**



Above: Adult male House Sparrow  
Photo by George Albright

**FREE BLUEBIRD BOOK!!!**  
**"The How and Why of Bluebirding"**  
by "Bluebird Bob" Walshaw

MOBS, along with all other NABS affiliates, recently received this terrific offer from Bob: **He is sending his book FREE to anyone in the US or Canada who requests the book and sends their mailing address to his email (Walshaw1@cox.net)** . This is an extremely generous offer. Bob describes his book as follows: " This is an outstanding hands-on guide on how to be successful in working with Bluebirds that also contains information on several other small cavity nesters. It will be a handbook to new and inexperienced people as well as perhaps providing some different ideas to more experienced birders."

**The Fledgling 2009 Schedule (pending determination of 2009 conference date)**

<u>Submission Deadline</u>	<u>Print Date</u>
March 26 ,2009	April 6, 2009
June 5,2009	June 15,2009
September 8, 2009	September 15, 2009
December 1,2009	December 8, 2009

**I welcome & encourage submissions from all members!** Please make submissions via email (Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, or PDF files are appreciated) or by mail or Fax ( 512-685-4327). Items I can "copy and paste" make you my favorite contributor!  
Thanks! Regina Garr, **The Fledgling** Editor  
regina@birds-i-view.biz 573-638-BIRD(2473)

**Missouri Bluebird Society Membership Information. Please make checks payable to: MOBS**

- Individual Membership  One Year ...\$9.00
- Two Years...\$16.00
- Family Membership  One Year....\$15.00
- Two Years...\$28.00

(Family Memberships to include family members living in the same household)

- DONOR.....\$50.00
- SUPPORTER.....\$100.00

**Renewal Date for all memberships is Jan. 1st following the year of Expiration.**

Please mail this membership Application, along with your check, to :

**MOBS/Attn: Membership  
P.O. BOX 105830  
Jefferson City, MO 65110**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

How many nest boxes do you monitor? \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Applications are also available on-line : [www.missouribluebird.org](http://www.missouribluebird.org)**



# Upcoming Events

*Do you have an event you would like listed in **The Fledgling**? Please note the submission info listed on page 6 of this issue and send your event info to me! Regina*

- **Sunday, February 8, 2009 Nature Photography: Winter Session**  
Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center 3:00-4:30p Adults 18 and up. Calling all Photographers...beginners and beyond!. Please call 816-228-3766 to register. **Reservations are required by: Saturday, February 7**
- **Tuesday, February 10 2009 Snappers--Birds of Prey**  
Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center 6:30-8pm Learn to identify many of Missouri's raptors and discover how their presence makes Missouri a better place to live. Snappers programs are designed for kids ages 7-11. Registration required. **Reservations are required by: Tuesday, February 10**
- **Saturday, February 28 - River Bluffs Audubon Society** Field trip to Lake of the Ozarks, Bagnell Dam, Willmore Lodge area for eagles, gulls, waterfowl. Meet at the Lottery parking lot on Bubba Lane in Jefferson City at 8 a.m. We'll probably eat lunch somewhere in the Lake area. Contact Dan Reed at 634-2599, e-mail Dan.reed@hotmail.com or Rich George at 893-5669, e-mail richgeorge4@mchsi.com
- **Saturday, March 14, 2009 It's Purple Martin Time** 9:30-11:00 am  
Reservations are required by: Friday, March 13 August A Busch conservation area St. Charles (Ages 14 and up) Purple martins are on their way back to the St. Louis area from South America. Are you ready? You can enjoy these beautiful insect-eating swallows in your own backyard with tips for establishing and managing your own colony. Please call: 636-441-4554
- **Thursday, March 19 2009 Lecture-Our Migratory Song Birds** 7:00 pm  
Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center. For more information please call the Joplin Conservation Office at (417)629-3423. **Reservations are required by: Thursday, March 19**
- **4/18/2009 East Central Illinois Bluebird Society Annual Conference**  
Ballard Nature Center \*\* Near Effingham,IL Registration by 4/10/09 which includes a fee hot meal for \$10.00 Contact: Loren Hughes 217-463-7175 [lhughes@joink.com](mailto:lhughes@joink.com)
- **April 18, 2009 BAN (Bluebirds Across Nebraska) Annual Bluebird Conference -**  
Eagles Club, Beatrice, NE. Mark your calendar! Visit [www.nebb.org](http://www.nebb.org) for more details
- **6/12/2009 -6/14/2009 Mountain Bluebird Trails 35th Annual Celebration!**  
Great Falls, Montana Speakers: Bill Thompson III, Al Batt, Julie Zickefoose, Scott Johnson, Steve Scholler, Fay Scholler contact: **Bob Niebuhr 406-453-5143**
- **September 9-13th North American Bluebird Society Convention**  
Hosted by the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania  
Grantville, PA Host Hotel: The Holiday Inn Harrisburg-Hershey  
Hotel is located at Exit 80 on Interstate 81  
Hotel Reservation deadline for Group Rate is **July 18, 2009**  
Complete conference schedule and on line registration is available at:  
[www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)  
Contact info for this event:  
Kathy Clark( BSP President) 717-695-0700 [KCBSP@aol.com](mailto:KCBSP@aol.com)  
Registrar: Joanne Slavinski 717-458-5645



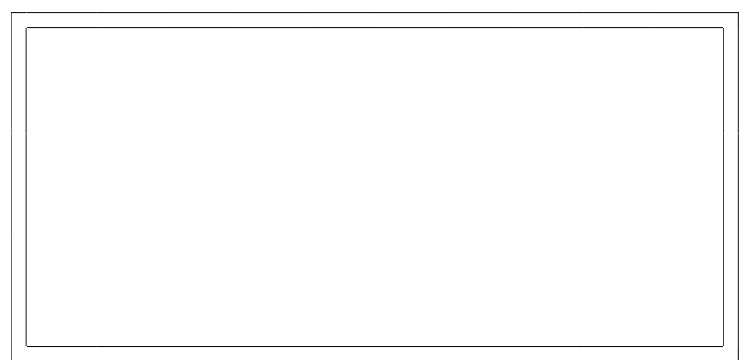
*Photo by Steve Garr*  
 Right: A Red-headed Woodpecker makes a home in typical "suburbia"; Read inside how an observant neighborhood couple saved this beautiful birds home from ruin.

- Saving a "Primary Cavity-Nester" Nest site!
- Upcoming events Calendar (Including 2009 NABS Convention)
- Have you heard of a "House Sparrow Trail"??
- Meeting Bluebird Winter Needs

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**NEW:** Check your address label for your membership expiration date

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