

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

that the Mobile colony was established by western birds expanding their range eastward along the coast. Colonies in the Tennessee Valley and other areas in the northern part of the state, however, are more likely to be composed of the northern white-fronted race, *P.p. pyrrhonota*, expanding their range southward. The invasion of Cliff Swallows into Alabama, therefore, appears to be progressing from west to east along the coast and from north to south inland.

Literature Cited

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HELPING BRING BACK THE BLUEBIRD (*SIALIA SIALIS*) – 1988 BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT

John Findlay, III

In spite of a severe drought, natural predation, and increasing encroachment by man, the Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) using my boxes had their best year yet in 1988. The trail, maintained for the past 11 years in Shelby and Jefferson Counties, with most nest boxes located in Oak Mountain State Park, produced 463 fledgings, bringing the all time 11 year total of successfully fledged young close to 3000 birds.

Of a total of 148 boxes, 119 were occupied by bluebirds. One hundred of the 119 produced nestlings, and of these, 98 fledged young. Counting all nesting attempts, usually two, sometimes three per season, there were 225 nests containing a total of 898 eggs (average of four per nest) from which 483 nestlings hatched (54%). Of these, 463 fledged successfully.

A total of ten boxes was used by Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches. House Sparrows occupied five boxes and flying squirrels 37. Flying squirrels have no difficulty getting into the one-and-a-half inch openings. They not only

take over the nest of the bluebird, but destroy the eggs and young, and may even kill the adult bird in the box. Predation from flying squirrels has reached an unacceptable level in many locations, especially in the state park.

The House Sparrow is less of a problem at present, but as man extends his residential and commercial developments into Shelby County at an alarming rate (more than a dozen new shopping malls in my trail area in recent years!) this alien species will probably expand its range into suburban areas.

With the assistance of Tom Imhof and Harriett Findlay, a total of 364 nestlings and three adult bluebirds were banded this year, bringing the total banded to over 1500 bluebirds, or roughly 50% of all nestlings. Several recoveries indicate that some of the birds stay close to home. This proved to be the case with one adult male and two adult females which I hand-captured in late fall this year from three boxes in Oak Mountain State Park. The band numbers differed by only one digit, indicating that all three had been banded as siblings from the same nest. A check of the records revealed that indeed all were banded as nestlings by Tom Imhof in May 1984, and the box from which they were fledged was less than one-half mile from the three boxes in which they were found nesting as adults.

There is considerable work and travel involved in building, monitoring, and maintaining an extensive bluebird trail. The rewards and the satisfaction of "Helping to Bring Back the Bluebird," however, make it a worthwhile project. Try it, you'll like it. *John Findlay, III, 2749 Millbrook Rd., Birmingham, AL 33243.*

NOTES OF INTEREST

Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) use box in Montrose. Last year it was reported in *Alabama Birdlife* that Howard and Larry Smith, two brothers who have a log cabin on Guntersville Lake, designed and put up a box on their property for Barred Owls (*Strix varia*). A few weeks later the owls were using the box, but it was never known for sure if they used it for nesting or only for roosting. Mrs. John H. Friend of Montrose read about the owl box in *Alabama Birdlife* and asked Larry and Howard if they could make a similar box for her. Howard made the box and sent it to the Friends who modified it slightly by putting drainage holes in the bottom and extending the overhang further out over the hole. Last spring the owls adopted the box and successfully fledged one owlet. The owls left the box last April but the Friends still see them in the area.