

You Can Help Bring Back Bluebird



A recent issue of Canadian Audubon Magazine reports a project of the Grey-Bruce Naturalists Club of Owen Sound, Ont., which could well set families, Scout clubs and manual arts teachers preparing for spring.

The suggested project has as its aim the building and placement of nesting boxes to encourage the return of our beautiful Eastern bluebird, now so threatened by man's aggressive ways.

Noted among factors responsible for the reduced population of this species are the use of pesticides and the severe southern winter of '60-'61 which killed many parent birds. Clearing the land of our once plentiful hedgerows and the felling of old orchards have also added to the problem. However, the increasing flocks of starlings which frequently steal the natural nesting sites of the bluebird are generally counted as its greatest threat.

Mrs. Frehe

DURING 1962, the Owen Sound Club sent out 683 boxes of which 11 per cent were successfully used by bluebirds. In 1963, 378 boxes were added of which 5.8 per cent were occupied.

Although weather conditions were less favorable in 1963, experts believe this year was less successful because too many participants failed to clean out the old nests at the end of the first season.

These figures are more encouraging than they may seem since tree swallows made their nests in 35-45 per cent of the above boxes. However, this generally desirable and attractive species

leaves an untidy box which the bluebird refuses to use during the next season until it is cleaned out. It is interesting to note that the bluebird does not object to following its own kind.

THE EVIDENCE also indicates that the desirable holes were occupied 7 per cent of all reported boxes. Adding up these figures we find that roughly 87 per cent of the nesting sites used in the experiment were occupied by the above three species.

In locating the box it was found that a bluebird preferred to have it placed on a fence post rather than in a tree. A lower-placed site also discourages English sparrows which sometimes appropriate a bluebird's nest.

An area in a fairly open space with some scattered trees, or at the edge of a woodlot ravine or garden was found most desirable.

THE BLUEBIRD, which feeds largely on insects, requires considerable territory. Three boxes per 10 acres appear to be a favorable distribution figure.

To approximate the natural nest-

ing pattern in old woodpecker holes and tree cavities is not necessary as the species is very adaptable.

Every creature in the wild has its enemies. The larvae of a blood-sucking fly sometimes invade the bluebird's nest and destroy the young.

Competitive tree swallows have been seen driving this species from the nesting site and throwing their eggs on the ground. Red squirrels are among the avowed predators of the bluebird.

A SUCCESSFUL and similar project to the above was carried out last spring by the Grand Rapids Audubon Society. Called "Bluebirds Unlimited," its members, with the aid of a local lumber company which cut the pieces from scrap, produced and distributed some 800 prefabricated bluebird homes.

A check of 80 boxes placed in local rural areas showed that 30 were occupied during the first season.

Directions for making your own bluebird box are simple; eight inches high, six inches square with a one and one-half inch hole six

By Lydia King Frehe
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

inches from the floor. A slightly slanted roof is desirable.

IF YOU WISH to order a pre-assembled box, write to Grand Rapids Audubon Club, c/o The Public Museum, Grand Rapids. The price is \$2 each or \$3.50 for two.

For those of you who have suitable acreage, this project could lead to an increasing awareness of the wild life in your midst, as well as helping to conserve a threatened species.

Come March, listen for the bluebird's cheerful "Cheer-wee, cheer-wee." It is one of the most heartening sounds of early spring.

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Brushing Up

George Landino, instructor of teen-age and children's art classes at the Bloomfield Art Association, helps Darby Armstrong with a painting project. Landino and Christos Papadopoulos, who also teaches the young people, work mainly in oils in the painting classes and in clay and plaster in sculpture classes.

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Canvas

(Continued from 2-D)

(bonding liquid). Linen needs a flexible bonding agent so the canvas won't crack. The liquid coating is brushed on and into the fabric and dried to a fine painting surface.

Commercially prepared canvas is readily available but may need a base coat of white to act like artist-prepared grounds.

THE CANVAS is stretched on wooden canvas stretchers that are made with tongue-in-groove mitered corners, available at any art store.

First the weave of the canvas is lined up squared with the frame. Four tacks or staples are impermanently applied, one in the middle

of each side. The canvas is stretched as tightly as possible but even so these first tacks will need tightening at the finish.

Working outward from these first tacks the canvas is stretched by hand or canvas pliers, very tightly, and tacked at even intervals all the way to the corners. The first four tacks are removed and tightened, and the corners are folded and tacked.

IF THE CANVAS is not quite tight enough or loosens after a period of time, little triangular wooden pegs called keys may be driven into the inside frame corners on the back to further stretch the canvas. There must be no wrinkles.

If this sounds too awesome, art stores will stretch canvases for you. But if any man in the Army can learn to make a bed so a quarter will bounce on it, you can learn to stretch a smooth canvas. And you will learn the professional respect for your materials.

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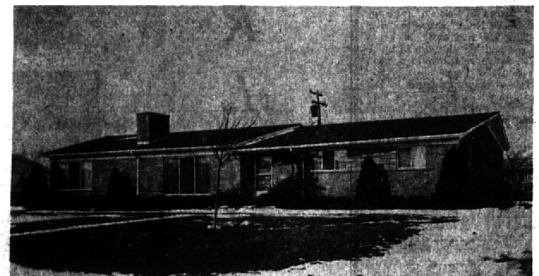
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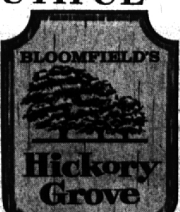
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