

SEABROOK ISLAND BLUEBIRD SOCIETY First Year Stats Completed



Paula Adamson notes status of a monitored nest box



Photos by Bob Adamson
Newly laid bluebird eggs found.

*By Judy Morr
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At their final meeting for the season, members of the Seabrook Island Bluebird Society (SIBS) agreed that their job was an exceptional one: enjoyable, educational and worthwhile. Cindy Willis commented that “it was fun to watch something be born and grow” from week to week. Her husband Max enjoyed the unpredictable nature of it. “You’d see three eggs one week and the next you might see two more eggs or several tiny pink hatchlings. You never knew!”

Not only did the monitors get pleasure from their task, they succeeded in fostering over 200 bluebirds.

The History:

Last September, Jim Burke, the co-founder and president of the South Carolina Bluebird Society, spoke at the Seabrook Island Natural History Group. He stated that, long ago, the Eastern Bluebird was one of the most common songbirds in the Carolinas. Man’s activities, and several severe winters have resulted in their population falling by as much as 90%. The bluebird is making a strong comeback due largely to conservation efforts.

Some years ago, as one of the activities performed to obtain certification as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary golf course, the Club installed bluebird boxes on both golf courses. Volunteers cleaned the boxes at the beginning and end of each season but no one actively monitored them. This year, with encouragement from the Lakes & Wildlife Subcommittee and stimulation from that SINHG presentation, SIBS was formed with Wade Harrell as its head.

The Need:

Monitoring increases the chances of success for bluebirds using the box. When good records are kept, it is also valuable for determining population trends. Monitoring boxes will alert you to problems birds may be having with predators and competitors. Seabrook Island’s bluebird trails provide an opportunity to observe nature at its best. It is exciting for all ages--young to old--to observe the development of the birds from eggs to the time when they leave the nest.



These newborn bluebirds are blind and have nary a feather



Photos by Kristy Amos
It's hard to count these older chicks

The Process:

The existing boxes were inventoried and scheduled for repairs. Additional boxes were obtained and installed with the assistance of the golf course maintenance department. The boxes were divided into four "trails".

- Front nine of Crooked Oaks
- Back nine of Crooked Oaks
- Front nine of Ocean Winds (there were no boxes on the back nine)
- Lake House
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A team was assigned to each of the trails to monitor for a 2 month period. The monitoring occurred weekly at a time convenient for the team and the golf course. The course even provided carts to use in the process. Logs tracked status of nests being built, eggs, hatchlings and then the absence of hatchlings, meaning they had fledged. Once the hatchlings had fledged, the old nest was removed so a new nest could be built.

The monitoring started in the cool days of March. The early occupants of some boxes were chickadees. This is a common occurrence in bluebird boxes as both species like hollow spaces to build their nests. Once that first group fledged, the next nests were all bluebirds. The last bluebirds had fledged by late August.

The Results: The statistics by trail are shown below.

Trail Name	# Of Boxes	Bluebird				Carolina Chickadee			
		Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged
Overall Total	65	63	252	219	203	28	113	85	83
Ocean Winds	20	24	93	85	80	3	4	4	4
Crooked Oaks 1	19	16	65	62	62	11	45	29	29
Crooked Oaks 2	19	15	60	39	31	12	59	49	47
Lake House	7	8	34	33	30	2	5	3	3

Overall a good success as almost 300 hatchlings successfully fledged. While 10 boxes had no nests, several boxes had as many as 3 families nesting during the season.

Another season means more team members are going to be needed to enjoy this interaction with nature. All supplies are provided and the team determines the best time for their weekly visit. That means no need to monitor in the rain, dark of night or early morning light. If you are interested in participating next year, please contact Dean Morr at 768-8278 or at SeabrookBluebirds@gmail.com.



Photo by Karen Preston
Karen & Russ Preston's grandson takes a peek



Photo by Kristy Amos
Here's a bluebird nest built atop a chickadee nest