

From Williamsburg Wordpecker

saraelewis.blogspot.com

Wednesday, July 7, 2010

[Bluebird Banding](#)



Eighteen of New Quarter Park's baby bluebirds got their official jewelry on Monday. Numbered bands were clipped around the ankles of bluebirds between the ages of 8 and 14 days who were born in boxes along a trail at the park monitored by Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists volunteers.



Under the watchful eyes of a half dozen of us, Allyson Jackson, a graduate of the College of William and Mary's biology program, attached the numbered North American Bird Banding Program bands as well as colored bands devised by the William and Mary Graduate Program to indicate the specific box where each bird was hatched. Graduate students like Allyson have been using the data collected from bluebirds at New Quarter and other local parks and golf courses as the basis for research that increases knowledge about birds and their habitats to support management and conservation efforts. The Bird Banding Program supports the work of conservation agencies, students, professional and amateur ornithologists, non-government agencies, and businesses. The data is used to develop hunting regulations, monitor bird populations and behavior, study the effects of environmental contaminants, restore endangered species, and address human concerns about wild birds.

If you should find a dead banded bird, report its number and the location where it was found to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center via their website at www.reportband.gov or by email to bandreports@patuxent.usgs.gov.



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Thursday, June 24, 2010

[Bluebirds and Extreme Heat](#)



The Williamsburg area weather forecast calls for a high temperature of 106 degrees today with a "feels like" temperature of 111 degrees Fahrenheit. At [New Quarter Park](#), the [Historic River Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists](#) who have adopted Bluebird Boxes on the 13-box trail are concerned about a number of nests that have or will be hatching out this week. I have read that ideal development requires that bluebird eggs be maintained between 96 and 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Females can sense when eggs are outside this range.

According to the [Bluebird Monitor's Guide to Bluebirds and Other Cavity Nesters](#), the incubating female tries to keep the eggs at around 92-95 °F. Sometimes when it's really hot, the females don't sit on the eggs as much, or they fan the eggs with their wings, or the eggs hatch faster. On the other hand, they may sit on eggs or nestlings more often to draw heat away. If at all possible, the authors recommend, the inside of the nestbox should not exceed 100 °F. Some research indicates that if temperatures outside are 100-104 degrees Fahrenheit, the percentage of eggs that hatch drops, and nestlings under nine days old can die. Wooden boxes apparently get hotter than PVC boxes, and all of the boxes at New Quarter are wooden. Ventilation holes are key. In hot climates, roofs should overhang the sides by at least 2" and 4" in the front. I read that some people tie small umbrellas on the top of the box for shade. Perhaps we should give this a try!



I took this photo of a group of nestlings on Tuesday, June 22. Apparently, one egg in that clutch did not hatch. These birds were about one week old at the time the photo was taken. When they are born, [as I've shown in previous posts](#), the nestlings are naked of feathers, blind, and helpless. Until they are about a week old and can control their own body temperatures, mothers will spend time brooding them and keeping them either warm or shaded. Then, at just over a week old, the nestlings are able

to thermoregulate their body temperatures, thereby decreasing the risk of mortality due to excessive heat. These nestlings are entering their second week of life, and will demand constant feeding as they are in their period of greatest weight gain. We'll see the parents going in and out of this box often.

I'll post updates on the fate of our heat wave babies in the days ahead.

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Wednesday, May 26, 2010

[Happy 12 Day Birthday](#)



See the little guys in the [post below](#)? Here's a photo I took today. All fluff and feathers, cuddled up for the night. Don't they grow up in a hurry?

Friday, May 14, 2010

[Welcome to the World](#)



Bluebird nestlings hatched today in Bluebird Box 12 at New Quarter Park! Take a look at my slideshow, right, to see lots of other [photographs](#) of eggs and nestlings in the 13 boxes at New Quarter Park. Members of the Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists, adopted the boxes and are recording nest data for the [Institute for Integrative Bird Behavior Studies](#) at the College of William and Mary. The bluebirds will lay up to three clutches per nest this spring and summer.

Tuesday, April 27, 2010

[Bluebird Nestlings!](#)



My friend, Conny, and I took a walk at New Quarter Park today and peeked in the bluebird boxes along the trail. Thirteen boxes, 38 eggs, and 12 nestlings! See more [photos](#).