

the NATURALIST CORNER

Brought to you by Peggy Potts and Cathy Ruff
Coastal Master Naturalists

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As graduates of the Coastal Master Naturalist Program offered through the Clemson University Cooperative Extension, we would like to share our excitement and enthusiasm about the many wonders of nature that can be enjoyed and experienced in the lowcountry. Through this monthly column, we will share our observations, sightings, and characteristics about a variety of nature topics, such as common insects, migrating birds and butterflies, wildflowers and plants and more. Basically, anything in nature is fair game to learn about and explore.

We also encourage you to share your observations and experiences so that we can learn about our natural world together. Please feel free to send in pictures and/or information of anything you find interesting by emailing Peggy Potts at ppotts@charlestoncounty.org.

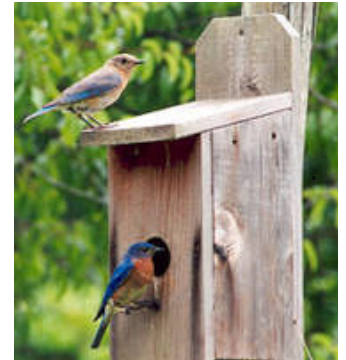
The Bluebird of Happiness! By: Peggy Potts



The bluebird is one of the most desired birds that backyard birders want to attract to their yards. The males have a beautiful blue color on their backs with a rusty-colored breast and throat. The females are grayish with blue wings and tail, and a subdued orange-brown breast.

You rarely spot a solitary bluebird. They normally travel in pairs or in small flocks. During courtship, the male will put on a show for the female by fluttering his wings in front of her. He will also feed her; and, both will preen each other's feathers. Bluebirds are monogamous and a pair of Eastern bluebirds can raise two to three broods per year. There can be as many as seven eggs and as few as three, pale blue and unmarked. Incubation takes about 16 days and the young birds can stay in the nest up to 20 days. Both parents will bring food to the nestlings.

Bluebirds are not attracted to birdfeeders unless they are feeders that provide mealworms. They also like berries, suet, and insects. They prefer open areas surrounded by trees that offer cavities for nesting, such as the natural hollows abandoned by woodpeckers. They also like birdhouses that are a fair distance away from dense cover and are about 6-feet high. Due to our warm climate the birdhouses should be left up year-round for roosting



birds as the Eastern bluebird is a year-round resident in the southeast.

*"The bluebird carries the sky on his back."
Henry David Thoreau Journal, April 3, 1952*

It's understandable how the phrase "the bluebird of happiness" was coined. With their harmonious song and vivid blue plumage they are a wonderful addition to any backyard habitat!



Charleston County Greenbelt Program

A wonderful place to see bluebirds, as well as a variety of other birds, is Roxbury Park located off of SC-174. The Greenbelt Program provided funding for this park which is owned and managed by the Town of Meggett. Visit Roxbury Park's website for information about hours of operation and more at www.roxburypark.org. Visit the Greenbelt Program website at <http://charlestoncountygreenbelt.org> and follow us on Instagram and the County's Facebook page. Don't forget you can earn "Lifestyle Loot" through the Wellness Program when you visit a Greenbelt site and post pictures using #ccgreenbelt.