

THE 1968 NESTING SEASON OF THE  
EASTERN BLUEBIRD IN BLOUNT,  
JEFFERSON, SHELBY AND WALKER COUNTIES,  
ALABAMA

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The Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis sialis*) is a common resident of rural Alabama. The male has a deep blue back with a cinnamon-chestnut breast. The female has a bluish-gray back and a duller breast than the male. The nestlings are blue and blue-gray with the characteristic spotted breast of the family Turdidae. Their range extends from Southern Canada to Southern Florida westward from the Atlantic Coast as far as Nevada and down into Mexico. This bird recedes from the northern areas in winter and is a permanent resident of Central Alabama. The Eastern Bluebird nests in natural cavities such as vacated woodpecker holes, hollow limbs, and cavities in fence posts or stumps. This bird has also adapted to well built and appropriately placed nest boxes developed during this study.

This paper represents only a part of a larger endeavor to learn more about the life history of the Eastern Bluebird in Central Alabama. I wish to express my appreciation to The Alabama Academy of Science, The Birmingham Izaak Walton League, and Birmingham-Southern College for financial aid and assistance during the period of this research.

The nesting data incorporated in the accompanying graph was accumulated during the 1968 nesting season. Observations of nesting activity in 1967 and 1969 indicate a close regularity in the pattern of nesting. The data was accumulated in 11 study areas in Jefferson, Blount, Walker and Shelby Counties. The 1968 nesting season was 24 weeks long beginning March 15 with the first observed nest and continuing until the last nestling left the nest around August 24. The graph indicates that the nesting occurred in three distinct periods. There were 43 nests in the first period. Thus, by May 25, 56% of the nestings were completed. There were 28 second nestings and six third nestings. Five of the third nestings occurred in the study area in Shelby County. The other third nest was built by a pair in the Walker County study area. The peak at week No. 25 in total eggs during the second cycle of nesting is not followed by an increase in total nestlings two weeks later as expected due to an unproportional rise in unhatched eggs. The significance of this will be discussed in a future paper. A report from a reliable biologist leads us to believe that a fourth nesting may take place under ideal conditions.

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