

JSU BLUEBIRD PROJECT A SUCCESS

Bill Summerour

As part of a nesting box project during the spring semester, 1987, an ornithology class at JSU constructed 100 bluebird boxes, 43 of which were placed on campus and adjacent farm country. These were checked periodically from 1 March through 31 August to determine the number of fledgings produced.

In all, 23 of the 43 boxes were used during the nesting season, 17 by bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*), three by House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and two by Tufted Titmice (*Parus bicolor*). Nine titmice fledged from the two boxes. One box was occupied by Brown-headed Nuthatches (*Sitta pusilla*), but all six of the nestings died due to a heavy mite infestation.

Bluebirds began investigating the boxes in early February with some nest construction getting underway by mid-March. Time for nest construction ranged from a few days to two weeks, depending on delays due to weather conditions. Second nests generally required less time to build than first nests. All of the nests were constructed of pine straw and lined with grasses, but this varied somewhat with the materials at hand.

Egg dates were from 31 March–4 August with the average clutch size being 4.75 eggs for the first brood and 4.0 for the second. Eggs were laid during the morning hours from daylight until 11:00 and the laying interval was one egg per day. The female alone incubated the eggs and the incubation period began upon completion of the clutch and lasted 13 days. The young remained in the nest for about 17 days and the last young of the season fledged on 22 August.

Seventy-three young fledged from 77 eggs in the first brood and 39 to 48 eggs in the second brood, For a total of 112 young fledged from 125 eggs, or a success rate of 89.6%.