

Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—September 1963

Charles T. Downer published a report on the breeding success of the Eastern Bluebird in North Carolina. The article was written in support of a national effort spearheaded by the Massachusetts Audubon Society to learn more about possible causes of the bluebird's widespread population decline. Downer presented data collected on bluebirds nesting in nest boxes in Polk County in 1961 and 1962. Up to 15 nest boxes were placed in multiple locations from fence posts to the side of a house. In 1962, 14 stations produced 80 fledglings from 103 eggs. Black rat snakes and "indiscriminate insect spraying" were considered primary reasons for nest failure. The presence of Starlings, House Sparrows, and Mockingbirds, as well as children playing near active nest boxes, reduced nesting success. A single clutch of nine eggs was documented.

Lee Jones provided a comprehensive report on Red-cockaded Woodpecker breeding at the Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge in Chesterfield County, South Carolina. Joe Norwood provided assistance with the project as well as photos of active nest cavities. This species was not noted on the refuge breeding bird list as of 1958 and Chesterfield County had not been included as a breeding location in the *Birds of South Carolina*. Jones collected data from November 1962 through June 1963. He provided observations of winter feeding groups and spring nesting information of 11 nest cavities. Most of the nests he examined were well below the published average of 18 feet high with one being documented at only seven and a half feet off the ground. Over 40 individuals were seen and Jones hypothesized that the colony had been there at least 5 years and may have been overlooked.

Eloise Potter summarized the 1963 Spring Count. There were 16 total counts, up one from 1962. A new count was started in Iredell County by a group of young birders "under the leadership of Mark Simpson, Jr." and it was noted that "cooperative parents provided the necessary transportation". Common Gallinule was a new county record on the New London Count in Stanly County on April 27 and another was "unexpected" on the Charlotte count on the 4th of May. Cattle Egrets continued their upward trend in the Carolinas.

A Purple Gallinule nest on River Bend Ranch Pond in Moore County, NC was highlighted in the General Field Notes section with a detailed report provided by Mary Keller. Ms. Keller noted she brought along Jay Carter, "a lad of thirteen" and stated "although short on experience, Jay has shown an amazing ability to find and identify birds".

A half century later, the contributions of both Mark Simpson, Jr. and Jay Carter to the field of ornithology in the Carolinas has been truly remarkable.