

# Bluebirds Use Robin's Nest

## Allen Jackson

Earlier this year, in May, Douglas Mehaffey of Harmony Valley Nursery in Deerfield, New Jersey reported a bluebird using a robin's nest inside a pump house on his property. Mary Watkins and I investigated and confirmed an interesting course of events.

There were two young Eastern Bluebird chicks in a mud-lined American Robin's nest located on a joist next to one of the building's rafters. We went back later to band the chicks but decided against it because they did not appear healthy enough. Although protected from wind and rain, the chicks' exposure to cold weather and the mud lining (which retained the cold temperatures) took its toll; ultimately, they both died. New Jersey's cold wet spring delayed nesting, reduced egg laying, and limited the development and survival of many young birds in 2013.

We erected a NABS-style box near the pump house but the parents chose to try the robin nest again, this time lining the mud nest with a little grass and laying two more eggs. One egg hatched; the chick (a female) survived to be banded July 23 and fledged at the end of July. Warmer weather and an abundance of food were positive contributing factors this time. Interestingly, the robin built another nest on the opposite end of the joist and fledged two young about the same time.



The pump house with its open wire mesh around the outside allowing birds to fly through or use the walk-in entrance. Naturally the parents chose to use the entrance!



The location of the nest on the joist.



The chick on banding day.

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