

Bluebirds to be on KCET

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Huell Howser comes to Placentia. That's right, I'm talking about the Huell Howser, who can be seen on KCET every week with his programs called "California's Gold" and "California's Green," among others. This visit was arranged to film a story on bluebirds.

I am a regular viewer of the various programs that Huell Howser produces on KCET. Most of them deal with historical and geographical features in California that many of us have never seen. A few years back it occurred to me that our beautiful bluebirds were a stunning feature in California and that very few people have seen them, or even knew they existed. So I contacted Huell Howser Productions and started a dialogue that resulted in his agreeing to film a story about bluebirds during this nesting season.

Now the hard part; when to schedule it. Huell preferred to film at different sites and look at a few nestboxes instead of going to just one site. My task was to schedule a date for several sites that would maximize the numbers of nests with eggs and nestlings. But that time frame is really up to the bluebirds. In early-April, I selected a trio of dates toward the end of the month that I thought would suffice. But a call from his producer on Tuesday, April 17, related that they had a cancellation and Huell wanted to film on Thursday, April 19th. Only two days notice!

I was a little panicky at first, but I said OK, and the pressure was on. Do I have to change the order in which we visit sites? Do I have time to make a quick check of all the most promising sites? Where do we meet?

Huell and his cameraman arrived at my house in Placentia at about 9 AM. First, he filmed the introduction of me and Dick Purvis in my front yard. I was glad that the roses and geraniums were in full bloom. He mentioned that he thought this story was better suited for the series *California's Green* than *California's Gold*, and I agreed.

Huell's team finished the introduction quickly, stowed the camera, and followed us to Loma Vista Memorial Park in Fullerton. I introduced Huell and his team to Susan Bulger, who monitors 13 nestboxes in the park. I chose this cemetery for two reasons: 1) it was close to a golf course where I wanted Huell to film, and 2) Susan employs a unique 2-hole nestboxes. The filming went well, especially when Huell saw four, 12-day old nestlings inside. When he saw them Huell kinda' shrieked and made sure the cameraman got good footage of them nestled all snugly in their nest.

We moved on to Coyote Hills Golf Course at the putting green area. I chose this site because it has a beautiful waterfall, lake and stream. There is a nestbox with Tree Swallows in a nearby tree. Since I hadn't checked the nestbox for a week or so, I wasn't sure if the eggs had hatched until I took it down. And to my elation, and Huell's amazement, the nest held 5 five beautiful white eggs nestled in a bower of soft downy feathers. He filmed these as several swallows noisily flew overhead.

From there we walked a hundred feet or so to a tree that had a WEBL nest in it. I was not too surprised when it contained five blue eggs. As he filmed, I could see the two

adults hopping nearer to the nestbox site and so he got some good footage of both the male and female.

After I replaced the nestbox, the adults edged even closer to it and I suggested that if we moved back a bit, one of them might fly to the entry hole. Almost on cue, the male did just that and disappeared into the nestbox - all caught on film. I was elated. It was almost as if I had written a script and was able to get the bluebirds to perform on cue.

The filming ended on that note and it was only 11:00 AM! Huell thought the filming went well and I told him if he was happy, I was happy. We shook hands and went our separate ways.

That afternoon as I was thinking about the day's events, it seemed almost surreal. I helped create a future on a very popular Huell Howser television program about our bluebirds.

Now I can relax!