

# THE FRIENDS OF THE BLUEBIRDS

# NEWSLETTER

Number 7

April, 2000

**THIS IS OUR 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY YEAR.** Twenty-five years ago this spring the first members of the Friends of the Bluebirds began monitoring nest boxes put up around SW Manitoba by John & Norah Lane and the Brandon Junior Birders. John had died in July 1975 and his wife and friends wanted to ensure that his work continued. That year, 16 individuals or small groups monitored 1109 boxes. Over the years our numbers of both boxes monitored and people doing the monitoring have increased. Some of you are now monitoring lines that you put up yourselves. However, as the Junior Birders put up their first boxes for the 1960 season many of you are looking after boxes on lines that have been in the same area for almost 40 years.

That first year (1976), the Friends of the Bluebirds recorded: 286 mountain, 26 eastern, 136 unidentified and 4 cross-nesting bluebird and 452 tree swallow nestings. Those first Friends were: The Junior Birders with Mr. Forsyth & Tony Burton, A.L. Campbell & kids, Mamie & Helen McCowan, Jim Spear, Mac & Don Murray, Roy Everitt, Lloyd Powell, Leslie & Doreen North, Mr & Mrs. Wayne Brown, Charles Reid, Cliff Findlay, the Hamiltons, the Mogers, John & Marion Robinson, Barbara Robinson and Hazel (Patmore) Skuce.

**RESULTS FOR 1999:** Thank you all for turning in your results. Our numbers for this year are lower than last year. The flooding in SW Manitoba left several of our usual lines completely inaccessible until late in the season. Other lines had some boxes that could not be reached because of the water levels. Details on nestbox occupants were received for 59 lines (2554 boxes). There were 563 mountain, 439 eastern, 221 unidentified and 5 cross-nesting bluebird nesting attempts for a total of 1228 nestings of bluebirds. In addition, 1214 tree swallow, 92 wren, and 42 house sparrow nestings were reported. Deermice, red squirrels and flying squirrels were also found. As you can see from Table 1, the number of boxes monitored was down slightly from last year and so were the number of nesting attempts for all

species. Eastern bluebirds appear to be less affected than mountain bluebirds. Nestings are still higher than those obtained in 1997 when a comparable number of boxes was monitored. It is to be hoped that our nice weather continues and the bluebirds have a successful season. Getting the maximum number of boxes into service will help. **Keep up the good work all of you!!**

**BOXES:** Boxes and extra lids are available by calling Barbara Robinson at 728-4029. Our supply of finished boxes is limited (about 70) but Jerry Wollman and the Newdale Hutterite colony have just donated a 4<sup>th</sup> load of scrap lumber. In the past, this lumber has been converted into boxes by Raymond Gladden and more recently by Jack Webb. Don Proven has built over 60 new boxes and replaced old dilapidated ones in the Carberry area. **Many thanks to all our box builders!**

**VOLUNTEERS:** Thanks to all our volunteers BUT we can always use more. There are a few lines (near Carberry, Waggle Springs, Hwy#250 Alexander to Souris, Oak Lake area) that need monitors or, if you know of some good habitat, we can provide boxes for a new line. If you know anyone you think might be interested, take them out on your line and introduce them to bluebirds!

**MONITORING:**

⇒ **Box checks:** Remember to check the hole size of your boxes (should be 1-9/16"/40mm); if your numbers are worn off, check with Ann Smith to obtain new ones.

⇒ **Unusual Nest occupants:** If you have trouble identifying an unusual nest occupant, please contact Barb Robinson (728-4029) or Jean Horton (728-4672). It would be nice to know the identity of our occasional nest occupants.

⇒ **Blowflies:** Watch for blowfly pupal cases when you clean the boxes. They are reddish brown to black with a shiny surface and are about 1/4" long. Greyish larvae (maggots) may be found attached to the nestlings where the feathers and skin are thin (around beak & ears, under the wings or at the base of the claw) or in the nest material.

**TABLE 1.** Nestings reported for the years 1983-1999. A nesting is defined as a nest in which at least one egg has been laid.

	NUMBER OF NESTINGS																
	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>BLUEBIRDS</b>																	
Mountain	*494	506	580	580	762	894	995	747	719	712	771	901	820	755	491	716	563
Eastern	87	54	100	168	258	276	354	207	191	164	167	337	265	403	289	527	439
Unidentified	18	6	7	24	83	66	51	97	49	73	84	220	170	182	142	218	221
X-nesting	1	0	3	2	1	2	2	6	2	3	0	5	4	2	4	10	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>1104</b>	<b>1238</b>	<b>1402</b>	<b>1057</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>1022</b>	<b>1463</b>	<b>1259</b>	<b>1342</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>1471</b>	<b>1228</b>
<b>OTHERS</b>																	
Tree Swallow	872	1194	1100	1068	994	1094	994	726	691	841	923	1164	1100	1215	1207	1240	1214
House wren	84	74	79	59	57	46	85	91	122	94	192	211	184	154	168	138	92
House sparrow	127	87	35	28	32	38	46	43	28	21	49	26	34	20	35	62	42
<b>Total Boxes</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2123</b>	<b>1838</b>	<b>1899</b>	<b>2045</b>	<b>2382</b>	<b>2039</b>	<b>1678</b>	<b>1548</b>	<b>1843</b>	<b>2202</b>	<b>2691</b>	<b>2471</b>	<b>2641</b>	<b>2586</b>	<b>2650</b>	<b>2554</b>
<b>Monitored Lines</b>								<b>44</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>59</b>

\*106 additional nests were found with frozen eggs

