

# Friends of the Bluebirds

## Newsletter

Number 11

April 2004

**Results for 2003:** Thank you to all who sent in results for 2003. Recorded number of Bluebirds hit the lowest reported for several years. It is important to note that several factors could affect our results. The reports showed that while the number of reported bluebirds were down, the total number of boxes reported were also down – by 400 boxes. In addition, late spring snow storms may have taken their toll on our early arrivals. In all there were **286 Mountains, 400 Eastern, 217 unidentified and two-cross nesting for a total of 905 Bluebird nestings.**

Unusual nestings reported for 2003 included the **Black-Capped Chickadee, 10 Red Squirrels and two Flying Squirrels.** House Wren numbers were reported at 77. Taking into consideration a percentage for reduced boxes, it is reasonable to assume that the tree swallow population may in fact be increasing. Reports showed numbers consistent with previous year reports, despite the lower number of boxes.

**NEWS FROM THE LINES:** An interesting comment just arrived with a summary report from **Bill Koscielny** of Onanole.

He reports that 2003 was "the second year in a row that Ravens have hunted fledglings leaving nest boxes". Apparently, the Ravens weren't fussy about their food species, as long as it lived in a nest box. "Ravens are now living year round in our area, let's hope they don't go to Raven in-services!"

**Doug and Genella MacIntrye of Brandon** reported two pairs of cross-nesting bluebirds.

**Ray and Barb Pettinger of Shoal Lake** continue their banding program. They banded **146 Mountain Bluebirds** and **35 Eastern Bluebirds** on three different nest box lines.

The Bluebird of happiness arrived for **Edie Evans and her record keeper Roy Gwiazda.** It has been suggested that Edie be awarded the "**Most Successful Nesting of the Year Award**" in view of their recent marriage!

Rookie Bluebirder **Lyall Franck** experienced a successful ratio of 3.59 (total number of fledges divided by the number of nestings) Lyall has adopted **Dr. and Mrs. David Stewart's** line east of Killarney.

Years	1986	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>BLUEBIRDS</b>											
Mountain	580	901	820	755	491	716	563	466	331	385	286
Eastern	168	337	265	403	289	527	439	349	378	395	400
Unidentified	24	220	170	182	142	218	221	212	261	262	217
X-nesting	2	5	4	2	4	10	5	4	7	6	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>1463</b>	<b>1259</b>	<b>1342</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>1471</b>	<b>1228</b>	<b>1031</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>905</b>
<b>OTHERS</b>											
Tree Swallow	1068	1164	1100	1215	1207	1240	1214	1243	1262	1213	1317
House wren	59	211	184	154	168	138	92	103	112	106	77
Black- Capped											1
Red Squirrels											10
Flying Squirrels											2
House sparrow	28	26	34	20	35	62	42	51	37	51	98
<b>Total Boxes</b>	<b>1899</b>	<b>2691</b>	<b>2471</b>	<b>2641</b>	<b>2586</b>	<b>2650</b>	<b>2554</b>	<b>2561</b>	<b>2734</b>	<b>2584</b>	<b>2184</b>
Monitored Lines		68	61	68	65	67	59	67	70	62	61

**CHANGING OF THE GUARD:**

**Anne Smith of Brandon** took a leadership role with **Friends of the Bluebirds** when Friends of the Bluebirds began in 1975. **Sincere appreciation is extended to Anne for her countless hours of volunteer time spent on behalf of the Friends of the Bluebirds!** Ann is currently with her husband who is on sabbatical. We look forward to Anne's return to Friends of the Bluebirds when they return to Brandon.

**Barry Danard of Killarney** graciously accepted the position of Chairperson in the spring of 2003. Barry brings with him an enthusiasm for Bluebirds and a willingness to see the Friends of the Bluebirds continue to provide nesting habitat far into the future! Executive Members include **Treasurer Vona Cochrane, Bob Andrews, Barbara Robinson, Hazel Skuce, Jean Horton, Carole Sangster, Clarke Snell, and Barb & Ray Pettinger.**

**NESTING BOXES: Proper nesting boxes are important to the successful nesting of the bluebird. Plans and boxes (free of charge) are available by contacting Bob Andrews of Brandon at 727-8985. Volunteer builders and donated lumber is always appreciated. There is a steady demand throughout the year. Bob is also looking for volunteer line monitors for various Bluebird lines in the area. If you are interested or know of someone who would like to become involved, contact Bob Andrews at 727-8985 or Barry Danard at 566-8258.**

**SUCCESSFUL NESTING TIPS:** Location location location says it all. Be sure to place your nesting boxes close to a constant food source (pasture lands), away from hydro poles (flying predators will wait on the pole then swoop down on the Bluebird as they leave the nest box). As well be sure to use the proper nesting box size (Bluebirds require 25 square inches of floor space and a 9/16<sup>th</sup> hole size). Check out the Friends of the Bluebirds new brochure for more details!

**Want to keep mice out of your boxes?** Bob Andrews removes the lid following the departure of the Bluebirds. This renders the boxes cold and unappealing to the mice looking for a winter home. The sun and rain naturally clean the nest box and you will avoid the risk of coming in contact with Hantavirus.

**HANTAVIRUS:** This once uncommon nest-box problem is now cause for serious health concerns in this part of the province. The virus is carried by Deer Mice and White-footed Mice, who shed the virus in their urine, droppings and saliva. The virus can be deadly for those who come into contact with it. You can prevent getting hantavirus while cleaning the nest boxes by:

- Wearing latex gloves.
- Not stirring up dust from droppings (never use a vacuum).
- Wetting the mouse nests with a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water.
- Wear a N100 rated facemask.
- Disinfect gloves before removing.

**NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY (NABS):** NABS's 27<sup>th</sup> Annual International Convention is taking place in Ithaca, New York this year. Conference dates are July 7 – 11, 2004. Meetings are open to all interested people, not just NABS members. The conference is sited at the world renowned "mecca" of ornithology, Cornell University and several field trips are also scheduled. For further information and registration forms visit the NABS web site [www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org) or contact Barry at 523-8258 or [jbdanard@mts.net](mailto:jbdanard@mts.net).

**RELATED BIRDER FESTIVALS OF NOTE:** Delta Marsh Birding Festival is being held May 14 to 16, 2004. Designated as an "Important Bird Area by Bird Studies Canada in 1999. The dates for the festival coincide with the predicted height of the warbler migration. For further info visit [www.dmbio.org](http://www.dmbio.org) or call (204) 239-4287.