

**Friends of the Bluebirds**  
-Founded 1976-

Number 17

**NEWSLETTER**

April, 2010

**Results for 2009** Thank you yet again to all our dedicated bluebirders for their efforts and reports. Without your care and concern the future of bluebirds in our area would be bleak indeed. A season noted for being a bit cooler than usual, but without extremes of temperature or rainfall led to an increase in total nest starts for both species. Mountain Bluebird fledges appear to have declined slightly from 2008 (reflected as well in % of successful nests) but those 425 unidentified (as to species) bluebird fledges introduce an element of uncertainty regarding this. Easterns continue to climb in numbers (both nests and fledges) as well as nesting success. Although one might expect even better numbers considering the increase in the numbers of nest boxes placed, many of the new lines are just that, brand new, and we need to wait for the birds to find and use them. Indeed, we all can afford to examine the patterns of nest box use on our lines, and make adjustments where we can in the hope of increasing bluebird nesting use and success. If tree swallows are dominating a portion (or all!) of a line, perhaps the box pairings (if that applies) should be reduced to single boxes or the total number of boxes reduced and the resulting surplus used elsewhere. Are the boxes in optimum habitat, or has land use changed since the boxes were first sited? Bluebirds look for suitable habitat before choosing a nest site. The best designed nest box in the world will remain empty of bluebirds if placed in the wrong location. **Bob Andrews** has adopted an excellent box placement strategy - he initially places only single boxes on a new line, adding a second box only at sites where there appears to be tree swallow - bluebird competition for the box. This works best, of course, only if one is checking the line reasonably frequently (every 2-3 weeks) Indeed, frequent monitoring is essential to making certain that problems on a line are seen and dealt

with in a timely and effective fashion.

**A Special Thanks:** To **Marg Hammell**, our new refreshments manager (slave, actually). The increased numbers at our annual meetings have often meant a very hectic time for Marg, but she has met the challenge superbly. A thank you as well to all those who contribute baking for the enjoyment of our members, and as an important means of raising funds to support our activities.

**A Renewed Request:** We would really appreciate members using, wherever possible, the Annual Summary Sheet for submitting their season's results in October. We often have to make follow-up phone / e mail contact to clarify reports sent in using other methods of reporting. This is because the monitors have missed information that, had they used the Sheet, would likely have come to their attention. Annual Sheets are available at Spring Meetings and are e mailed or sent out by regular post to monitors who miss the meeting. Please don't hesitate to ask for a replacement if yours goes astray.

Remember, we would also appreciate receiving summaries by October 31st of each year, now is perhaps a good time to mark that on your calendar. To all who used the summary form last year, and mailed/e mailed in their results in a timely fashion, please accept my heartfelt thanks!

**In Memoriam:** **Dorothy Baillie** (Viriden). Mrs. Baillie, together with her late husband Evan, monitored a bluebird line in the Oak Lake area over a ten year period.

**New Members:** Thanks to the initiative and efforts of Publicity Manager **Vern Gilbertson** and Line Manager **Bob Andrews** our active membership has seen a significant increase. Over 20 new teams have joined our ranks, most of them submitting their first reports in 2009. Their names will be found amongst the list of monitors on

the last page of this newsletter.

**Retired:** Isabelle Smith (Brandon), who remains a keen supporter of our efforts.

**Reactivated:** After an absence of several years, Joan & John Murray (Lyleton) are back on the bluebird trail. Well done!

**Fund Raising:** Our efforts to raise some much needed cash by selling used game licenses has brought in \$137 in late 2009. A special thank you to **Carole & Murray Sangster, Ellen Blain** and **Edie Evans** for their contributions to this effort. You can assist us by forwarding any game license (intact with stamp, and if possible, also with signature of the licensee) to Barry (Box 569, Killarney R0K 1G0). All profit from the sale of these goes to the Friends' bank account. . Phone or e mail Barry if you need more information.

As well, **Vern Gilbertson** has once again donated one of his lovely bluebird carvings for a raffle, final ticket sales and draw will be at the upcoming Spring Meeting.

**Notes from the Lines:** **Ross Robinson** is to be commended for creating a very detailed data base for his new line, including GPSing the location of each box. He also inquired about the numbering system for boxes on any given line- and, for anybody concerned about that, use the numbering system that works for you. Of course, keep a careful record of those numbers and attach a duplicate record of those numbers to your line map (you have provided a line map to Bob Andrews, haven't you?). **Arnold & Bridget McPhaden** noted a decrease this year in the clutch size of tree swallows on their line. As well, tree swallows often occupied both boxes at a site. This phenomenon is being seen more commonly and is more widespread than previously recognized. Yet another reason for placing single boxes at each site, at least initially. **Rick Hayward** also noted poor nesting success for tree swallows on his line. Several teams ( **Edie Evans & Roy Gwiazda, Bert Perey** and the **Danards**) recorded very high rates of nesting success - due likely to stable weather and effective predator control.

**Ray & Barb Pettinger** once again were kept very busy with their banding efforts. Combined results from 3 lines with a total of 86 boxes yielded a total of 127 Mountain Bluebirds (124 nestlings, 2 adult females, 1 adult male) and 41 Eastern Bluebirds (38 nestlings, 3 adult females) banded. Ray and Barb have one of the most productive lines in our entire region, and their area (Shoal Lake/ St. Lazare/Birtle) remains a stronghold of Mountain Bluebirds.

**NABS 2010.** This year's Annual Meeting will be held Sept. 10-12 at Hamilton, Ontario.

Check the NABS web site for updates. We are an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society, and recommend individuals joining this great organization. Membership forms can be found at all of our meetings, and one can easily join on-line at the NABS web site. The four issues of the journal *Bluebird* you receive each year is well worth the price of membership! Note also that you can access most back issues of the journal at the NABS web site.

#### **Searching for more information?**

If you need to replace any of the information sheets that were included with your original monitoring kit, contact **Evelyn Andrews** for copies of the following ( please include a SASE along with your request ):

"RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BLUEBIRD NESTLINE OPERATORS"

"FACT SHEET"(Life Cycle Information / Determining the Age of Nestlings / Problems and Predators)

As well, three excellent web sites for bluebird information are:

"NABS" - THE source of information:

[www.nabluebirdsociety.org/](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/)

"Sialis" - A great site! Crammed with facts and practical ideas for the nest box monitor:

<http://www.sialis.org/index.html>

As well, [www.bluebirdnut.com](http://www.bluebirdnut.com) is well worth investigating.

Please feel free to sign out some of the many books and pamphlets in the Anne Smith Lending Library available at our annual Spring and Fall

meetings. See **Ken Barclay**, our librarian, for details at the meetings.

**2009 Monitors:** The following members were able to submit Summary Forms for this past season (new members in bold print) : Bob & Evelyn Andrews, **Ken & Colleen Barclay**, Ellen Blain, **Peter Blashko**, Linda & Gareth Boys, Jack Bryer, **Ernie Burdeniuk**, Brian Burrows & Diane Chatwin, **Hugh Cowan**, Barry & Judy Danard, **Rick Dillabough & Joanne Brooking**, Bev Dunlop & Dave Uhryniuk, Edie Evans & Roy Gwiazda, Lyall Franck, Vern Gilbertson, Herb Goulden & Ross Robinson, Janet Gross, Bob & Jean Horton, Ed & Yvette Huzyk, **Don & Diane Falloon**, **Deb Foster**, Lyall Franck, Vern Gilbertson, Herb Goulden, Janet Gross, Gord Hammell & George Curry, **Rick Hayward**, **Jack Heide**, Bob & Jean Horton, Terry & Christina Jefferies, Bob & Bianca Keffen, **Tamara Kemp & Miguel Boulet**, Lily Kilmury, **Don & Mardie Lee**, Doug & Genella MacIntyre, **Dan & Michie McIntyre**, **Amy McLay**, **Phil MacMillan**, Bridget & Arnold McPhaden, Mary-Anne Maendal, Lynne & Brian Manns, **Lorlie Mitchell & Piet Van Dijken**, Joan & John Murray, **Sharon North**, **Gallus Oberholzer**, Edith Parsons, Colette & Ken Pierce, Bert Perey, Ray & Barb Pettinger, **Rick Potter**, Dave, Ashley & Pat Randall, Barbara Robinson, Dale & Joan Robinson, **Ross Robinson**, Larry Romaniuk, Bill Sandercock, Murray & Carole Sangster, Hazel Skinner, Joe & Grace Slawinsky, Isabelle Smith, Lloyd Stankey, Gerard Wade, Anne Wollman, **Cindy Wright**, Margaret Yorke & Amelia Reid, **Henry Zarn**. A total of 58 teams were active this past season, looking after 73 lines.

**Future Meetings & Directions:**

Are there particular topics you would like to see discussed at future meetings, or covered in the newsletter? Do you have suggestions to improve the operation of our organization? Any of the following members of the Coordinating Committee (see below) would welcome your ideas!

**Contacts:** Do you have : questions, concerns, or suggestions? Contact any of the following:

Bob / Evelyn Andrews : (727-8985),

*andy208@mts.net*

Barry / Judy Danard: 523-8258,*jbDanard@mts.net*

Barbara Robinson : 728-4029

**Odds 'n' Ends:**

Looking to upgrade your older boxes? Try replacing thin lids with 3/4" (or at least 1/2") plywood that extends 2" out from the box on the sides and 3" in front. This protects from rain and shades well on hot days. You will probably have to move or replace the old weather strip that holds the back of the lid in place.

A new type of box has appeared on the market in the USA, a metal box lined with white styrofoam. A report in *Bluebird* notes that although these boxes offer quite reasonable protection from overheating on hot, sunny days, bluebirds seem to avoid them and prefer to choose wooden boxes. One possible reason seems to be the white lining of the metal boxes, the birds possibly preferring a darker interior. We would appreciate your feedback on any similar (or different!) trends you notice when using the new boxes Bob is turning out (some of which have a white interior).

Bluebird nestlings, after about 10-12 days of development, are fully feathered on the back. Eastern Bluebird young have white spots on the feathers of their back, spots that are missing on Mountain Bluebird young. Of course, examining young at this stage can be fraught with danger, one must be very careful not to startle the young into fledging prematurely!

A container of baby wipes is very handy for hand cleaning after handling old nests, especially if deer mice have been in the nest box. A container of alcohol-based hand cleanser is also useful for this purpose, without creating the need to dispose of used wipes.

**Please** feel free to send in and share your hints, ideas and suggestions for more effective bluebirding!

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD	199	222	242	234	242
EASTERN BLUEBIRD	217	361	446	477	514
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRD	184	162	135	115	99
X-NESTING BLUEBIRD	3	12	5	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>858</b>
TREE SWALLOW	1032	791	935	944	1134
HOUSE WREN	59	40	70	46	57
HOUSE SPARROW	28	8	33	31	35
B-C CHICKADEE		3	2	5	1
RED SQUIRREL		6	1		4
FLYING SQUIRREL	2		2	1	3
<b>TOTAL BOXES</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>2305</b>
MONITORED LINES	48	56	50	51	73
	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>58</b>

**TOTAL FLEDGES** (reported)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS	689	817	661	789	693
EASTERN BLUEBIRDS	523	1040	955	1386	1531
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRDS	228	277	245	160	425
X-NESTING BLUEBIRDS	13	41	12	8	16
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1453</b>	<b>2175</b>	<b>1873</b>	<b>2343</b>	<b>2665</b>

**% OF NESTS** (reported) **THAT WERE SUCCESSFUL**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS	87.7	89.5	82.1	87.3	85.7
EASTERN BLUEBIRDS	75.6	79.4	65.4	78.8	81.6
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRDS	47.2	65.7	49.5	33.7	68.8
X-NESTING BLUEBIRDS	80	91	40	100	100

**AVERAGE FLEDGES / NESTING ATTEMPT**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS	3.23	3.63	4.1	3.5	3.8	3.67
EASTERN BLUEBIRDS	2.34	3.05	3.4	2.5	3.2	3.1
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRDS	0.89	1.85	2.7	2.3	1.7	2.1
X-NESTING BLUEBIRDS	3.6	2.6	3.7	2.4	4.0	5.3

	NUMBER OF NEST ATTEMPTS												
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD	491	716	563	466	331	385	286	165	199	222	242	234	242
EASTERN BLUEBIRD	289	527	439	349	378	395	400	193	217	361	446	477	514
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRD	142	218	221	212	261	262	217	92	184	162	135	115	99
X-NESTING BLUEBIRD	4	10	5	4	7	6	2	10	3	12	5	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>1471</b>	<b>1228</b>	<b>1031</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>858</b>
TREE SWALLOW	1207	1240	1214	1243	1262	1213	1317	841	1032	791	935	944	1134
HOUSE WREN	168	138	92	103	112	106	77	89	59	40	70	46	57
HOUSE SPARROW	35	62	42	51	37	51	98	53	28	8	33	31	35
B-C CHICKADEE							1			3	2	5	1
RED SQUIRREL							10	2		6	1		4
FLYING SQUIRREL							2		2		2	1	3
<b>TOTAL BOXES</b>	<b>2586</b>	<b>2650</b>	<b>2554</b>	<b>2561</b>	<b>2734</b>	<b>2584</b>	<b>2184</b>	<b>1585</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>2305</b>
MONITORED LINES	68	65	67	59	67	70	62	61	48	56	50	51	73
						<b>No. of active teams:</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>58</b>

NOTE: We have records similar to the above going back to 1981, feel free to write / email Barry for the data.

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**AVERAGE FLEDGES / NESTING ATTEMPT** (only for nests monitored for success, data base as directly above)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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**TOTAL NUMBER OF BOXES MONITORED FOR SUCCESS AND FLEDGLING COUNTS:**

2004 : 358      2008 : 1670  
 2005 : 492      2009 : 1855  
 2006 : 613  
 2007 : 1460