



Friends of the Bluebirds

2019 Newsletter

Important Community Outreach Projects

Thanks to hard working, dedicated volunteers the spring of 2019 brought about some wonderful opportunities for the Friends of the Bluebirds to spread awareness, and build partnerships.

Brad Mummery of Neepawa put valuable time and resources into educating 4-H kids in his community. Together Brad and the kids built 37 nest boxes during an efficient and fun filled workshop day. The club thoroughly enjoyed meeting some of the kids, and hearing about the important lessons they learned about Bluebirds and conservation. A huge thanks goes out to Brad in doing his part in educating the next generation, a crucial step in ensuring the safety of bluebirds in the years to come.

In addition, Phil Weiss and Herb Goulden have begun building an exciting new partnership with the Westbran Training Centre located on McGregor Avenue in Brandon. The centre provides essential skills training, apprenticeship and other opportunities for youth and adults to advance in the workplace. The organization graciously agreed to build bluebird boxes, using material provided by the club, with no additional labour fees. This arrangement relieves some of our overworked volunteers of the pressures of providing the club with enough boxes, while providing the students of Westbran with valuable hands on experience.

The Friends of the Bluebirds owes a huge thank you to Brad, Herb and Phil for doing their part in doing their best to build a bright future for bluebirds and Manitoba. Each and every member is encouraged to follow in their footsteps and reach out to your community!



Brad Mummery (L) and Herb Goulden (R), 4-H kids from the Neepawa area, and their bluebird boxes!

A Note about Tree Swallows

Dear Friends,

In this ever changing world it is becoming more and more apparent that we are needed as friends of more than just the bluebird.

The boxes we monitor and maintain become safe homes for hundreds of Tree Swallows. Though it can be disappointing to house so many Tree Swallows rather than bluebirds, gathering data on these agile fliers is just as important.

Aerial insectivores (swallows, swifts, flycatchers, nighthawks, etc.) are in steep decline. According to the State of Canada's Birds Report 2019, the family has declined 59% since 1980.

The Friends of the Bluebirds ask that you please report on all of your nest box occupants, even if they are not bluebirds.

**See page 5 for the Friends of the Bluebirds own Tree Swallow nesting data

Executive Meeting with Kevin Corwin

On May 13th, 2019 the executive committee of the Friends of the Bluebirds enjoyed an informative meeting with Kevin Corwin of Colorado. A board member with the North American Bluebird Society, and the NABS Affiliate Liaison, Kevin made the long flight to Brandon in hopes of connecting the Friends to its national umbrella organization.

The executives in attendance learned about the funding support available through NABS partnerships, as well as the magnitude of bluebird conservation across North America. The Friends of the Bluebirds is one of 60 affiliates under the North American Bluebird Society, six of which are in Canada, and one in Bermuda. You, as a bluebird monitor are joined by 12 000 NABS members. Kevin would like to see a Canadian presence on the NABS board as the data gathered in Canada is important, and unique from the data collected in the United States.

Kevin stressed the importance of community conservation groups such as the Friends of the Bluebirds as cavity nesting birds are in widespread decline. Monitoring lines not only provides nesting sites for the birds but also provides data that can be collected and used by professionals to track and maintain populations. He was pleased to see the high level of activity presented by the Friends of the Bluebirds in our commitment to monitoring lines and reaching out and forming partnerships with other organizations.

A large discussion was had on the importance of the data collected by the Friends of the Bluebirds, Kevin strongly recommends we look into submitting data through a larger platform such as the Cornell Labs Project NestWatch. Project NestWatch is an online portal for entering bird nesting data into a pool of data from across North America. There is also an app available with the advantage of entering data straight from the field, and geo referencing nest boxes.

With Kevin needing to catch a flight back to Colorado, the Friends executives thanked him for taking the time to travel all the way to Manitoba. He was presented with a Friends of the Bluebirds cap as a token of our appreciation.

Photos

By: Linda Boys



Left: male Eastern Bluebird with food for nestlings

Above: male Mountain bluebird dives at prey

Right: one of five Eastern Bluebird fledglings

Nest Box Building

Our own Friends co-chair and nest box builder in chief has been hard at work developing our very own Friends of the Bluebirds nest box design! Due to increasing numbers of new members, and hordes of ever aging nest box lines, the demand for boxes has continued to grow. While Herb has proven himself to be a box building machine, it has become difficult to keep up to the demands. In addition, building boxes costs money, and as a non-profit organization we must develop ways to fund the important work we do.

Our previous nest box design costed approximately \$7.50 per box. However; thanks to Herb's handy craftsmanship, he has reduced our price per box to about \$5 per box. His design modifications include:

1. Roof Size: Reduce the size from 11 in x 12 in to 9 in x 10 in. This still leaves a 1 1/2 in side overhang and a 3 3/4 in overhang on the front. I would still recommend cutting drip rails on the underside of the roof
2. Backs: Reduce the backs from 18 in to 16 in. You have a choice of having about a 1 1/2 inch lip at the bottom and a shorter attachment section at the top or a back flush with the bottom and a larger attachment section at the top. For the model with back flush with the bottom you can insert a screw to the post inside the box about midway up. There is room for a power drill to do that. These are quicker and easier to build
3. Rain Cap: Maximum of 1 in wide x 7 in.

A breakdown of the costs of box building: (makes 39 boxes)

Home depot - 2 sheets 3/4 in std spruce plywood @ \$42 each = \$84

21 pieces of 1 in x 6 in x 6 ft common spruce @ \$3.16 ea = \$67

Nails and screws \$ 15

Tax = \$22

Total = \$188

Cost per box = $188/39 = \$4.82$

****If you use (5) 1 in x 8 in spruce boards for backs @\$11.29 per 12 ft board (McMunn and Yates, Brandon) the cost will be a little over \$5 per box with a few backs to spare****



To assist in implementing this new and improved nest box design, the Friends of the Bluebirds formed a partnership with the Westbran Training centre to assist in box production. Herb has also sent a grant proposal on behalf of the Friends to the Bluebird Fund for \$1500 to purchase materials for nest boxes.

But Herb has once again come through to produce a box building tutorial that makes building your own boxes easier than it has ever been! In addition Warren Enns of Westbran has drawn up professional blueprints based on Herb's modifications.

Materials list to construct four bluebird nest boxes

For sides and fronts for 4 boxes – purchase one 1 in x 6 in x 12 ft spruce board

For backs - purchase one 1 in x 8 in x 6 ft spruce board or obtain 4 pieces of 3/4 in plywood 7 in x 16 in

For roofs obtain 4 pieces of 3/4 in plywood 9 in x 10 in

For bottoms, rain caps and cleats, use materials left when cutting backs, sides and other scrap material on hand

Per box you will need about a dozen 1 1/2 in # 8 Robertson deck screws or 1 1/2 in common nails and three 3 in common nails bent for pins

Prices for materials will vary but are estimated to cost between \$5 & \$6 per box

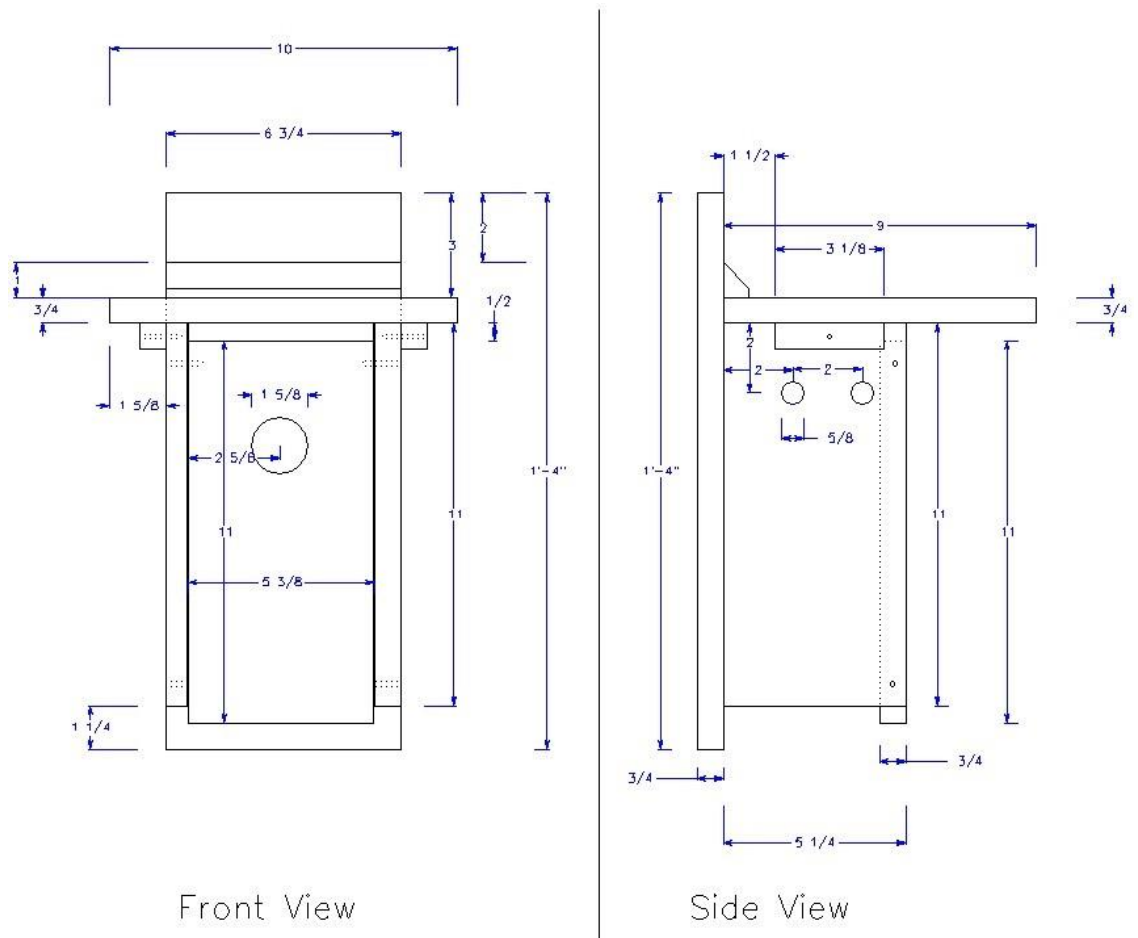
Tool suggestions

A power saw or hand saw

Power drill with a 1 5/8 inch hole saw or drill bit, a 1/2 in drill bit, and a 3/16 in drill bit.

A #8 Robertson screw driver or drill bit

Hammer and carpenters square



Friends of the Bluebirds Data Comparison 2013-18

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
# OF Lines reported:	46	44	40	50	49	41
Number of team Monitors:	30	32	28	38	37	32
<u>Boxes</u>						
empty boxes	164	176	133	189	201	194
boxes removed	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	11
Total # of boxes used:	1413	1291	1267	1372	1394	1334
Total # of boxes:	1577	1498	1389	1561	1595	1539

Number of nests

Mountain bb	102	109	100	199	104	88
Eastern bb	502	553	566	446	547	371
Unidentified bb	50	39	69	90	47	87
Xnesting bb	0	3	1	6	0	0
Bluebird Total	654	704	736	741	698	546
Tree swallows	837	845	776	811	806	753
Wrens	45	71	40	57	77	52
Other (chickadee only 2016 & back)	1	5	3	1	1	1

Number of eggs

Mountain bb	520	438	380	484	423	402
Eastern bb	2109	2223	2361	2255	2197	1439
Unidentified bb	216	140	217	303	179	273
Xnesting bb	0	15	5	24	0	0
Bluebird Total	2845	2816	2963	3066	2799	2114
Tree Swallows	4547	4231	3817	3973	3700	2502
Wrens	161	201	133	150	249	64
Other (chickadee only 2016 & back)	50	15	5	7	NR	NR

Number of successful nests

Mountain bb	93	79	66	66	67	108
Eastern bb	376	413	443	403	396	314
Unidentified bb	35	24	33	48	27	60
Xnesting bb	0	3	1	1	0	0
Bluebird Total	504	519	543	518	490	482
Tree Swallows	621	622	576	628	621	404
Wrens	23	39	27	19	32	13
Other (chickadee only 2016 & back)	2	3	1	1	1	1

Number of fledges

Mountain bb	439	398	313	328	296	323
Eastern bb	1659	1662	1809	1572	1600	1220
Unidentified bb	113	98	130	135	107	178
Xnesting bb	0	12	2	3	0	0
Bluebird Total	2211	2170	2254	2038	2003	1721
Tree Swallows	3547	3400	2933	3141	2977	1803
Wrens	118	185	124	107	201	69
Other (chickadee only 2016 & back)	9	12	5	7	NR	NR

Mortality

bb nests with dead birds	51	34	40	41	80	43
bb dead young	137	85	98	122	282	114
Bluebird Total	188	119	138	163	362	157
Tsw nest with dead birds	97	93	32	44	119	60
Tsw dead young	321	360	106	127	423	217

Success Rate (%) *

Bluebirds	77.1	73.7	73.8	69.9	70.2	88.3
Tree Swallows	74.2	73.6	74.2	77.4	77.0	53.7

* # successful nests/ # nests

NR = NO REPORTS

Note: As discussed earlier the conservation of Tree Swallows is important. Mortality data shows large number of dying young Tree Swallows. Success Rate percent shows tendency to plunge and fluctuate (as seen in the low success in 2013). Tree Swallows face challenging issues, data collected from your lines is valuable in finding conservation solutions. Please keep diligent notes on your Tree Swallows as well as your bluebirds.

Photo by: Erica Alex



Executive Contacts

Chairperson: Gord Hammell
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