

Friends of the Bluebirds NEWSLETTER

Number 12

"30 YEARS OF BLUEBIRD CONSERVATION "

April, 2005

Results for 2004: Many, many thanks to all those who persevered through bad weather and disappointing results to monitor and report on their lines. Without their hard work bluebirds would indeed be in trouble in SW Manitoba.

As a glance at our results table will show, not only did our nest numbers tumble as a result of the May blizzard, but the number of lines and boxes being monitored is at an all-time low. We need to work hard at recruiting new volunteers to assist us in maintaining nest box numbers. Those of us who have monitored in the past and are still able to do so should perhaps consider rededicating ourselves to the cause of bluebird conservation. Reporting of results is critical to an understanding of the success (or otherwise) of our work as a group.

A special thanks to those who were able to record nesting success. This information should serve as a baseline against which we can more clearly compare future results. Your data is also presented on the last page.

Retirees: The following have retired from active monitoring at the end of 2004, and we thank them for all their hard work in the past: **George & Maureen Greelay** (Brandon), **Hazel & Wes Rose** (Brandon) and **June Zwolinski** (Virden).

New Members: **Clayton Baumung** (Brandon), **Evan Casselman** (Boissevain), **Bev Dunlop** (Minnedosa), **Lynne & Brian Manns** (Brandon), **Bert Perey** (Brandon) and **Jerry Wilson** (Minnedosa) have all begun monitoring and reporting this past season. A hearty welcome to them all.

News from the Lines: There was a substantial increase in the number of cross-nestings this season, possibly due to blizzard related mortality and subsequent shortage of same species mates. **Barbara Robinson** reported 9 such nestings on her lines! **Ray & Barb Pettinger** continue their banding program, with 60 Mountain and 11 eastern Bluebirds banded. **Don Proven** reports the loss of nesting Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows due to the use of herbicide to control Leafy Spurge in adjacent ditches.

Bridget & Arnold McPhaden reported a story with a happy ending. Two young bluebirds escaped from a box being checked and despite Bridget's best efforts she could retrieve only one. Until, that is, the father bluebird called the missing youngster back to the vicinity of the nest and recapture by Bridget. All's well that ends well!

A Special Plea: Please make every effort to use the Summary Forms to record your year's data, and to fill in the top of the form as completely as possible (your line number can be found on the outside of the envelope containing your monitoring kit). The poor fellow who deals with your summaries is easily confused!

New Meeting Venue: Beginning with the Spring 2005 meeting, we are moving from the University to the Riverbank Discovery Centre. More parking and much better access, amongst other benefits. More expensive, too, so we may be considering fund-raising in the near future. Your ideas for this are welcomed!

Free Nest Boxes: Over the years we have handed out many hundreds of free boxes (thanks to the efforts of **Jack Webb**, **Don Proven** and **Bob Andrews**, and the donation of wood by **Jerry Wollman**). Sadly, many of these boxes are on lines that aren't monitored or reported. We have decided that in the future that no more boxes will be given away to teams who have not sent in a report in the previous season. This change comes into effect for 2005. Not only is this an attempt to maximize the data we gather, but monitored lines present a better conservation strategy for bluebirds.

A special "Thank You" to **Vern Gilbertson** for his donation of his lovely bluebird sculpture for our raffle.

Postage Costs: To reduce unnecessary expense we will no longer mail out monitoring kits to teams who have not reported for two years in succession. If this affects you, and you find that circumstances permit your becoming active again, please let us know and we'll be delighted send a monitoring kit out to you.

Anybody who misses the spring meeting will still get a newsletter by mail.

NABS Convention: The annual convention of the North American Bluebird Society takes place in Asheville, North Carolina on May 19-22. this year. For further details : www.ncbluebird.com Note: you don't have to be a member of NABS to attend this event.

Wanted: Volunteers to act as mentors to new monitoring teams. You need only contribute as much time as you wish and can afford to this initiative. Retired blue birders are more than welcome to participate! Please contact Barry or Bob for details.

Editor for the newsletter. Great job, excellent benefits package. See Barry for details.

Early Arrivals: Have you kept, or do you wish to keep, records of early bluebird arrival dates? It might be useful to start a file of such species/location/date records for our area. Robert K. Lane of Alberta (the son of our founders) has reported , in last summer's issue of *Bluebird* journal, on trends towards earlier migration patterns . Using data gathered over a 41 year period at the Ellis Bird Farm in central Alberta, he and a co-worker determined that Mountain Bluebirds were arriving back from the south an average of 16 days earlier than in the 1960's. Tree Swallows were showing up an average of 10 days earlier , and in both cases these shifts in arrival times seem strongly linked to parallel temperature gains over the past 40+ years.

While it seems likely similar global warming trends are occurring in SW Manitoba, data is needed to confirm this suspicion. Please feel free to send any records you might wish to share to Barry Danard. (Box 569, Killarney MB, R0K 1G0)

Searching for more information?

The monitoring kit you receive is loaded with valuable, practical advice on maintaining and monitoring a bluebird nest box line. Should you wish to expand your horizons or explore further the world of bird conservation please try the following web sites:

GENERAL INFORMATION ON BLUEBIRDS:

NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY (NABS):

<http://nabluebirdsociety.org/index.htm>

CLARKE SNELL:

[www3.telus.net / public / cesnell](http://www3.telus.net/public/cesnell)

ENDANGERED / THREATENED BIRD SPECIES:

AUDUBON SOCIETY:

www.audubon.org/bird/watch

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (includes Canadian Wildlife Service data):

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/>

CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE:

http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/birds/Trends/disclaimer_e.cfm

NESTING & MIGRATION PATTERNS

THE BACKYARD BIRD COUNT :

(A fascinating site, be certain to check out the "time lapse" migration patterns):

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

BIRDING/BIRDWATCHING (in general)

BIRDING IN CANADA:

<http://www.web-nat.com/bic/>

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 member of the Coordinating Committee (see below) would welcome your ideas!

Contacts: Do you have : questions, concerns, or suggestions?

Contact any of the following:

Bob Andrews : (727-8985),

Vona Cochrane : 727-2986, vcoch@mts.net,

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

Carole Sangster : 728-7489, mcsang2@mts.net

Barbara Robinson : 728-4029



IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CONTACT JUDY OR CAROLE ,
THANK YOU.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD	771	901	820	755	491	716	563	466	331	385	286	165
EASTERN BLUEBIRD	167	337	265	403	289	527	439	349	378	395	400	193
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRD	84	220	170	182	142	218	221	212	261	262	217	92
X-NESTING BLUEBIRD	0	5	4	2	4	10	5	4	7	6	2	10
TOTAL	1022	1463	1259	1342	926	1471	1228	1031	977	1048	905	460
TREE SWALLOW	1022	1164	1100	1215	1207	1240	1214	1243	1262	1213	1317	841
HOUSE WREN	192	211	184	154	168	138	92	103	112	106	77	89
HOUSE SPARROW	49	26	34	20	35	62	42	51	37	51	98	53
B-C CHICKADEE											1	
RED SQUIRREL											10	2
FLYING SQUIRREL											2	
TOTAL BOXES	2202	2691	2471	2641	2586	2650	2554	2561	2734	2584	2184	1585
MONITORED LINES	58	68	61	68	65	67	59	67	70	62	61	48

TOTAL FLEDGES (for 358 nests reported)

Mountain Bluebirds: **446** Eastern Bluebirds: **338** Unidentified bluebirds: **55** X-nesting bluebirds : **36**

TOTAL BLUEBIRD FLEDGES REPORTED : 875

% OF NESTS THAT WERE SUCCESSFUL (data base as above)*

Mountain Bluebirds: **75.5%** Eastern Bluebirds : **65.8%** Unidentified bluebirds: **21.3%**

X-nesting bluebirds: **100%**

AVERAGE FLEDGES / NESTING ATTEMPT (data base as above)*

Mountain Bluebirds: **3.23** Eastern Bluebirds: **2.34** Unidentified bluebirds: **0.89**

X-nesting bluebirds: **3.6**

* These numbers are probably on the high side, due to under reporting of nests lost due to the May blizzard. It is important when reporting on nesting success to include ALL nests, including those that failed for whatever reason.