

# Friends of the Bluebirds

Number 16

NEWSLETTER

April, 2009

**Results for 2008** Once again we would like to extend our deep appreciation to all the hard working and dedicated volunteers who have maintained, monitored and reported on their nest box lines. Better weather made for a season with better results than last year. Although there was very little difference in the number of nests recorded for both species of Bluebird, there was a nice improvement in nesting success. As a result there was an estimated increase of over 100 MOBL and over 400 EABL fledges when compared to the 2007 data. Also encouraging was the increased number of boxes being monitored for nesting success. A summary of the years results, as well as a list of all those who were able to send monitoring records is found at the end of this newsletter.

**A 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. Note: Jack Bryer can please ignore this request, his extremely detailed reports are done using a different format and more than meet our requirements! 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

**Sharing results:** Are you interested in having your results reach a larger audience? Consider joining ( no money involved!) the Nest Watch program sponsored by Cornell University's Lab of

Ornithology. More details on this program will be available at the upcoming Spring Meeting, or you can reach their web site at:

[www.nestwatch.org](http://www.nestwatch.org) or  
[www.birds.cornell.edu:80/birdhouse/NABSmembers.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu:80/birdhouse/NABSmembers.html)

**New Members:** **Terry Jefferies & family (Ryland, Taylor, & Christine)** ( Glenboro ) have taken on three older lines, and **Glenda Klassen** (Ninette) has resurrected a line formerly run by her daughter. We welcome them to our ranks and look forward to hearing of their continued success in the future. Remember - we can never have too many nest box monitors! Please encourage likely candidates to join us in this ideal pursuit for all who love nature.

**Retired:** **Joan & Charlie Kingdon** (Minnedosa), **Delia Milne** (Brandon), **Joan Switzer** (Darlingford), **Roy & Lorna Wallis** (Glenboro) and **Evelyn Jorgensen** (Cromer) will no longer be monitoring for us, but all remain on our mailing list, and we thank them for all they have done in the cause of Bluebirds in the past and trust they will continue to follow our efforts with interest.

**Returned!:** As proof that you just can't keep a good Bluebirder down, **Lloyd Stankey**, after "retiring" to his home in Winnipeg, has started a new line on Hwy 7 north of Winnipeg. Both he and **Larry Romaniuk** now make up our Interlake Connection!

**Recovering:** We are delighted to report that **Edie Evans'** husband, **Roy Gwiazda**, has come through his 2008 serious surgery in good health and spirits. Well done, Roy.

**Fund Raising:** Our efforts to raise some much needed cash by selling used game licenses is paying off. You can assist us by forwarding any game license (intact with stamp, and if possible, also with signature of the licensee) to Barry

before June 1st, 2009. (Box 569, Killarney R0K 1G0)

Examples of what we need would include fishing, waterfowl, upland game, deer, moose, etc. Licenses from other provinces are especially welcome. We have sold these to a stamp dealer in Ontario, and all profit goes to the Friends' bank account.

Remember, we need the entire license, not just the stamp. Phone or e mail Barry if you need more information.

**Notes from the Lines:** The Noel anti predator nest box guard continues to show great promise as a deterrent to especially raccoons. **Janet Gross**, the **Danards** and **Bob & Evelyn Andrews** all reported good results using the Noel guards. **Edith Parsons** experienced lots raccoon predation on her line, and perhaps her bluebirds would benefit from the use of this device. **Lyall Franck** as well as **Isabell Smith** reported an upswing in the numbers of Deer Mice in their boxes. This may indicate the need for increased caution when disposing of these nests, increased density of Deer Mouse populations can mean an increased frequency of the Hanta virus in these populations. If this is happening along your lines remember to take the necessary steps to reduce your chances of exposure to the virus. In short, wear a good dust mask ( with HEPA : high efficiency particulate air filter) when cleaning boxes, wet down the nest material with, if possible, 10% Javex - to reduce the risk of inhaling the dust from the nesting material, and use rubber gloves when handling the nest contents. As well, deer mice like to use boxes near clover or canola fields. If this is the case on your line you should probably move the boxes, not just to reduce the deer mouse problem but also because those nest boxes are not likely near good habitat (unless there is a grazed pasture on the other side of the road).

**Jack Bryer** failed to record, for the first time in many years, nestings by Mountain Bluebirds. The trend for this species on our area has certainly been downward. although they appear to slowly building populations back up from the low of 2004. Fortunately, MOBL nests are routinely more

successful than EABL nest attempts (check out the data table on the last page ). The reasons for this are not fully known (there's a nice research project for someone!). **Ray & Barb Pettinger** were again very busy with their banding program. Combined data from their three lines revealed that they banded 111 MOBL (including 10 adult females), 51 EABL (including 4 adult females) and 44 Tree swallows (TRES). They also had the good fortune to recapture two MOBLs, one of which was banded in 2006, the other in 2003! To top off their great season they spotted an albino MOBL.

**Brian Burrows** notes that his line saw a significant downturn in spring arrivals and seasonal nesting, possibly due to bad weather during migration northward from the USA. Declines in smaller, local populations can take several seasons to recover, possibly due to the tendency of bluebirds to return to near their birthplace. They are slow to expand into other pieces of habitat, but if nest boxes are available sooner or later they will take advantage of them. Brian and others have seen an increase in House Wren (HOWR) nestings in the past year. HOWRs, though a native, protected species, are bad news for bluebirds. They will not only plug up boxes with "dummy" nests, but are active egg predators, attacking bluebird nests and throwing out or puncturing the eggs, even throwing out young birds on occasion. The only legal ways to deal with this threat are to place nest boxes at least 50+ feet away from shrubs (doesn't always work) or to employ a "wren baffle" to the nest box (mixed results have been reported). Contact Barry for details on this last deterrent if you wish to try it. **Bob & Jean Horton** have noticed a serious decline in bluebird numbers on their line, and attribute the problem to habitat changes. Indeed, this is often a problem, whether due to urban sprawl or to changing agriculture practice. The only solution is to move the line to better habitat. Nobody should feel that a line or box location is written in tone - do whatever is necessary to provide the birds with the best chance of success. We welcome, and need, your stories and comments

gleaned from your experiences each nesting season. Please record these on the summary form, using additional paper as you require. Your tales make the newsletter much more interesting to others.

**NABS 2009.** This year's Annual Meeting will be held at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Sept.10-12. This is the location of the famous Hawk Mountain, for raptor enthusiasts. Check the NABS web site for updates. NABS has undergone some very exciting and encouraging changes in administration and operation over the past year, and if you've been considering joining, now is a great time to act on your interest. The new, improved journal *Bluebird* is full of great articles, and 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, two 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>

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.

If you can't attend our meetings to select books yourself, send a note to Barry Danard or Bob Andrews asking for a list of publications available.

**Web site:** We are searching for a member(s) to take over running our web site. Unless the site can be kept updated there may be little reason for its

continuance, so please contact Judy Danard if you can be of assistance.

**Outreach/Publicity:** Do you ever give talks on bluebird conservation to school or community groups? If you feel the need for audio-visual support feel free to inquire about borrowing any of the video / DVD presentations that we have shown at our meetings. Contact Barry for details.

**2008 Monitors:** The following members were able to submit Summary Forms for this past season: Bob & Evelyn Andrews, Clayton Baumung, Ellen Blain, Linda & Gareth Boys, Jack Bryer, Brian Burrows & Diane Chatwin, Barry & Judy Danard, Bev Dunlop & Dave Uhryniuk, Edie Evans & Roy Gwiazda, Lyall Franck, Vern Gilbertson, Herb Goulden & Ross Robinson, Janet Gross, Bob & Jean Horton, Ed & Yvette Huzyk, Terry Jefferies & family, Bob, & Courtney Keffen, Glenda Klassen, Doug & Genella MacIntyre, Bridget & Arnold McPhaden, Mary-Anne Maendal, Lynne & Brian Manns, Delia Milne, Edith Parsons, Colette & Ken Pierce, Bert Perey, Ray & Barb Pettinger, Barbara Robinson, Dale & Joan Robinson, Larry Romaniuk, Bill Sandercock, Murray & Carole Sangster, Hazel Skinner, Joe & Grace Slawinsky, Isabelle Smith, Lloyd Stankey, Gerard Wade, Anne Wollman, Margaret Yorke & Amelia Reid. A total of 37 teams were active this past season, looking after 50 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](mailto:andy208@mts.net)

Vona Cochrane : 727-2986, [vcoch@mts.net](mailto:vcoch@mts.net)),

Barry / Judy Danard: 523-8258, [jbdanard@mts.net](mailto:jbdanard@mts.net)

Barbara Robinson : 728-4029

	NUMBER OF NEST ATTEMPTS												
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD	755	491	716	563	466	331	385	286	165	199	222	242	234
EASTERN BLUEBIRD	403	289	527	439	349	378	395	400	193	217	361	446	477
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRD	182	142	218	221	212	261	262	217	92	184	162	135	115
X-NESTING BLUEBIRD	2	4	10	5	4	7	6	2	10	3	12	5	2
<b>TOTAL</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>460</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>826</b>
TREE SWALLOW	1215	1207	1240	1214	1243	1262	1213	1317	841	1032	791	935	944
HOUSE WREN	154	168	138	92	103	112	106	77	89	59	40	70	46
HOUSE SPARROW	20	35	62	42	51	37	51	98	53	28	8	33	31
B-C CHICKADEE								1			3	2	5
RED SQUIRREL								10	2		6	1	
FLYING SQUIRREL								2		2		2	1
TOTAL BOXES	2641	2586	2650	2554	2561	2734	2584	2184	1585	1924	1900	1914	1972
MONITORED LINES	68	65	67	59	67	70	62	61	48	56	50	51	51

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

**TOTAL FLEDGES** (reported)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS	446	689	817	661	789
EASTERN BLUEBIRDS	338	523	1040	955	1386
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRDS	55	228	277	245	160
X-NESTING BLUEBIRDS	36	13	41	12	8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>1453</b>	<b>2175</b>	<b>1873</b>	<b>2343</b>

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

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS	75.5	87.7	89.5	82.1	87.3
EASTERN BLUEBIRDS	65.8	75.6	79.4	65.4	78.8
UNIDENTIFIED BLUEBIRDS	21.3	47.2	65.7	49.5	33.7
X-NESTING BLUEBIRDS	100	80	91	40	100

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

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

TOTAL NUMBER OF BOXES MONITORED FOR SUCCESS AND FLEDGLING COUNTS:

2004 : 358      2008 : 1670

2005 : 492

2006 : 613

2007 : 1460