

2004 Fall-Winter Newsletter

Welcome to the fall-spring 2003-2004 newsletter. The AGM is set for Saturday March 13th at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, Ontario. This will be our 15th annual meeting since the first in 1990. The 2005 meeting has been set for Saturday March 12th, 2005.

The afternoon feature speakers will be Michael Measure from the Fatal Light Awareness Program and Stu McKenzie, discussing nestbox success with prothonotary warblers. Members and club nestbox reports will be featured in the morning sessions. The OEBS Conservation Award will be awarded in the morning session. This award is given out annually to an individual or group that has made an outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation during the previous year. Last year's recipient was the Halton Bluebird Club. They have maintained a very successful nestbox trail in and around Bronte Provincial Park near Oakville.

15th Annual OEBS AGM	Royal Botanical Gardens Headquarters Saturday March 13, 2004
9:00 a.m.	Register
9:30 a.m.	Business Meeting
9:45 a.m.	Members nestbox reports
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee Break
11:15 a.m.	Don Wills on Meal worm feeders for bluebirds
12:00 – 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 – 2:00 p.m.	Michael Measure, Fatal Light Awareness Program
2:00 – 2:15 p.m.	Coffee Break
2:15 – 3:00 p.m.	Stu McKenzie, Prothonotary Warbler Nestbox Analysis
3:00 – 3:45	Bucket Raffle

The Bucket Raffle will be continued. Any items you have to donate, please bring them in the morning.

The 2003 nestbox questionnaire and membership application is included with this newsletter. Please send in your 2003 nestbox trail results. This information enables the OEBS to monitor long term trends in EABL reproductive success and population trends of EABL's in Ontario.

The winter of 2002-2003 was extremely cold. All the Great Lakes froze over, even Lake Superior. This has not happened since 1994 and before that, 1982. Many bluebirds overwintered in 2002-2003.

Most reports indicated they overwintered successfully, but were hit by one of the worst ice storms in recent memory (in the last 30 years). These conditions persisted over most of Southern Ontario and as far north as Bracebridge.

From about April 1st to April 8th, 2003, the ground was covered by six or seven inches of ice, which made it impossible for EABL's to pick insects off the ground. Also at this time of year, most of the seed bearing fruits, like staghorn sumac and buckthorn would have been completely eaten by EABL's and other birds. The duration of the ice covering and cold made for a lethal combination.

Many EABL's had overwintered probably because there was such an abundant supply of fruit bearing shrubs, etc. in the fall of 2002. By April 1st, 2003, many EABL's had already returned from migration to Southern Ontario.

Don Wills checked all his boxes near Caledonia in March of 2003 and found no dead EABL's. When Don re-checked his boxes after the ice storm in early April, he found 12 dead EABL's. These birds succumbed during this ice storm. Don reported that he was down by about 40 pairs from his 2002 numbers.

Loretta Mousseau near York, observed 2 pairs of EABL's at her nestboxes before the ice storm and none after. Her overall numbers were down by about one-half.

George Coker said his numbers – both adults and young – were down by about one-half from 2002. George will be bringing nestboxes to the conference. Contact George at 1-905-643-2033 Highway 8, Winona, ON L8E 5K6.

Reproductive success for 2003 was about normal or slightly above except that most trail operators reported fewer EABL pairs had returned. It is difficult to say how many bluebirds succumbed during the ice storm. From reports received, I would say the number of returning pairs in 2003 was about 30-50%, less than the previous year and this can be directly attributed to the ice storm. Many other birds were also reported as fatalities during this period. Woodcock and Phoebes were especially hard hit. During the winter of 2003-2004, temperatures have been near normal. December 2003 and February 2004 have been warmer than usual, but January was on average 3oc colder than normal. Fewer EABL's were reported overwintering in 2003-2004. EABL's on Christmas 2003-2004 bird counts were in much fewer numbers than the previous year.

Baillie Birdathon 2003

Sylvia Van Walsum of the Halton Bluebird Club was our official representative on the Baillie Birdathon. Sylvia, with the help of her husband William Poaps, raised \$755.00 of which \$188.75 is being returned to the OEBS. This is a record amount. Thanks again Sylvia for your effort on behalf of the OEBS. The Halton Bluebird Club newsletter is included with the OEBS newsletter.

You never know what to expect each bluebird season, but you always hope for that perfect season. Weather is the most critical aspect of both EABL survival and reproductive success. Let's hope 2004 is another year like 1998, one of our best ever.

See you at the AGM on March 13th!!!

Bill Read