

## 2007 Spring Newsletter

The 18th annual general meeting of the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society will be held Saturday March 17, 2007 at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington Ontario.

Our feature speaker is Chris Earley. Chris is the interpretive Biologist/Education Co-ordinator at the Arboretum University of Guelph. He will give a talk on hawk appreciation and also discuss the wasp project (see Fall 2006 newsletter). Chris is looking for volunteers to take part in this study.

December 2006 was the warmest on record. This mild weather continued until January 15 when Southern Ontario was hit with an ice storm. It stayed colder than normal until February 20 when it started to warm up. During this period most days were well below normal (temps) with no days above freezing. This cold stretched well into the U.S., down as far as Texas. We will have to wait and see how this affected EABL overwinter survival. Overall, January 2007 was 2.5 degrees warmer than the long term average.<sup>1</sup> It was the story of two different halves of the month; with the first part continuing the very warm December temperatures and the second being mostly average with a few cold days. However, these latter cold temperatures were not enough to offset the many early days that were more than 10 degrees warmer than average.

February was about 4 degrees less than average, making it the first month that has been significantly lower than average since December of 2005. On February 19th it got up to 2.9oC making it one of only 5 above average days we saw during the month. It also broke a run of 22 below average days stretching back to January 27th, quite a contrast to the run of 31 straight days of above average temperatures we had between December and January.

It will be interesting to see how the winter overall will come out with its runs of very high and then very low temperatures. Right now it looks like it will shake out to be an average winter.

1. Long term averages based on 1970-2000 data for the Waterloo Wellington Airport

<b>OEBS Agenda Saturday March 17, 2007</b>	
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Registration
9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Business Meeting Introductions - Bill Read Membership Report - Marion Laing Conservation Director's Report - Don Wills Treasurer's Report - Marion Laing OEBS Conservation Award - Don Wills
10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Members Nestbox Reports
10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Coffee Break
11:00 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.	David Lambie, Banding Eastern Bluebirds - sexing and aging
11:20 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Don Wills - Nestbox Designs - what works, what doesn't
12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch

1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Chris Earley (Hawk Appreciation)
2:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.	Coffee Break
2:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Chris Earley - Wasp Project
3:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.	Video - On Bluebirds in the nestbox
3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Bucket Raffle Draw

### **Bucket Raffle**

As in previous years, a bucket raffle will be held. Anyone wishing to donate a prize should bring it to the meeting. Money raised helps offset the cost of hosting the meeting.

### **Registration Fee**

There will be a registration fee of \$5.00 for members and \$6.00 for non-members.

### **Lunch Arrangements**

Coffee, tea, donuts and muffins will be served. There are two restaurants nearby and the Gardens Café downstairs. You can bring your own lunch and eat upstairs. That will allow time to walk through the indoor gardens.

### **Parking**

You can park for free in the Royal Botanical Gardens' parking lot.

## **Doug Tarry Young Ornithologist's Workshop Attention Parents and Keen Teen Birders!!**

The 2007 Young Ornithologist's Workshop will be held at Long Point Bird Observatory from Friday August 3rd to Sunday August 12th, 2007. This intensely-packed week of activities focuses on field ornithology and includes bird banding, censusing, field identification, birding field trips, guest lectures and much more!

Come make new friends from across the country with similar interests in the world of birds. Six lucky applicants (ages 13-17) will be selected for the Doug Tarry Bird Study. Awards and recipients will have all expenses (except travel costs) paid. Applications are due April 30, 2007. For additional information and an application form, contact: Landbirds Programs Coordinator at Bird Studies Canada (email: [lpbo@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:lpbo@bsc-eoc.org)), or visit the BSC website at [www.bsc-eoc.org/lpbo/yow.html](http://www.bsc-eoc.org/lpbo/yow.html)

### **2007 Baillie Birdathon**

Sylvia Van Walsum will be our official representative for the Baillie Birdathon. Sylvia will have a pledge sheet at the meeting, 25% of the money pledged goes back to OEBS.

## **North American Bluebird Society AGM**

I just received a letter from Helen S. Munro, volunteer co-chair on behalf of the NABS regarding our status as an affiliate of NABS. The 2007 NABS annual meeting will be held September 19 - 23, 2007 at the University of Georgia. They have requested that each affiliate give \$250 U.S. to procure between \$5,000-\$8,000 needed to cover the cost of speakers and rental space for the conference.

The OEBS hosted the NABS meeting in 1996 at The Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton Ontario Canada.

By all accounts, it was a very successful conference with excellent speakers and a banquet that featured Kay McKeever, a world expert on owl behaviour and rehabilitation.

As chairman, my goal was to have a very successful conference and to budget so that income from the banquet and registration fees, etc. met all our expenses. I budgeted a break-even point of about 120 people. We had almost 190 and actually made money from the conference.

When you have a sum of money that isn't budgeted, it leads to overspending. The NABS needs to run their affairs like you do your house. You have to budget. You can't spend more money than you have or it leads to financial problems. Before the NABS starts asking for money to run conferences, it needs to get its own house in order, a permanent location, a newsletter editor, etc. Let the affiliates run the conferences. I'm still waiting for my fall 2006 bluebird journal. There are many successful non-profit organizations that have excellent newsletters and conferences, and stay financially solvent on membership dues alone.

## **Bluebird in a Robin's Nest**

Chris Lyons sent me several pictures of a bluebird incubating 4 eggs under an overhang in a fledged American robin's nest. It incubated past the required 14 days, but the eggs were infertile. Chris has a very successful nestbox trail near Port Hope Ontario.

## **Preparing your Nestbox Trail for Spring 2007**

Make sure all of your boxes are cleaned (free of deer mice). This past year was an especially bad year for deer mice using boxes. Plug your boxes in late fall to prevent them from entering. Boxes in Ontario should not have ventilation holes of any kind, only a 1-1/2 inch entrance hole. Use some sandpaper to remove any wood burrs from around the entrance hole. A piece of wood dowel wrapped with sandpaper works well. The thicker the wood, the greater the cooling effect later and insulating effect in early spring. Since most of the early storms, come out of the east or north west have the entrance hole face southeast. All boxes should be on metal poles or t-bars and should be protected from climbing predators (either grease the pole or use a stove pipe guard). Do not grease the poles or t-bars in

areas where there are cattle, as they will lick the grease off. Avoid horse farms as horses chew the boxes and they attract house sparrows.

## **What Bluebirding is all about**

The idea behind bluebirding is to provide a safe, predator-proof nestbox for Eastern Bluebirds to fledge more young than in natural cavities. Boxes should be built with no ventilation holes and the entrance hole should face away from the prevailing winds (in Southern Ontario most storms come out of the northwest and the east). The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society will not endorse boxes that do not have full predator protection. A thorough application of grease on a t-bar or metal pole has proven to be almost 100% effective in keeping raccoons from climbing them. A special stove pipe guard can also be used to stop climbing predators. Bluebirding has progressed from just nailing up boxes to the nearest tree or fence post (these in most cases become feeding boxes for raccoons), to superior management techniques, supplemental feeding and heat in the box. Top bluebirders spend their own money on nestbox materials and don't rely on money from other sources to keep them going. In fact, the bigger the grant, the less that is done. Bluebird trails with boxes located on fence posts can have a negative effect on bluebird populations. Raccoons, after finding food in a box (a female bluebird or young) will visit other boxes in the area and predate those as well. It is up to you to stop this from happening. Since natural cavities are located on a random basis, only that one nest would be lost. If you are not able to protect your boxes, you should consider removing them in order to help the bluebird population. Unmanaged poorly located boxes continue to hurt the bluebird population.

## **Overwintering Eastern Bluebirds**

Many reports of Eastern Bluebirds overwintering in Ontario were received. Audrey Heagy and David Okines had as many as five coming to their bird feeders near St. Williams, Ontario. They were feeding mealworms and raisins. These bluebirds were ones that nested successfully at their farm, all were banded. They had 3 pairs with 6 successful nestings in 2006.

Don Wills reported a maximum of 15 bluebirds near his boxes in Carluke throughout January with many investigating nestboxes on warm sunny days. I had as many as 11 bluebirds near my boxes on Howell Rd near St. George in late December.

## **OEBS Website**

Dagmar Rudzewitsch is our new website coordinator. She has done an excellent job at updating the OEBS website [www.oeps.ca](http://www.oeps.ca). Have a look and tell us what you think, changes, additions etc. E-mail [info@billreadsbooks.com](mailto:info@billreadsbooks.com) or [dagmar@lara.on.ca](mailto:dagmar@lara.on.ca)