

2009 Spring Newsletter

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society Spring 2009 Newsletter

Editor: Bill Read 24 Brant Pl, Cambridge, On N1S 2V8

Welcome to the spring 2009 newsletter. The AGM is set for **March 14th** at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington. Our feature speaker is **Dr Daniel Joshua Mennill** from the University of Windsor. Over the past three years Dr. Mennill has led a research team into the American south in search of the **Ivory-billed Woodpecker**. This bird was considered by many to have gone extinct in the 1940's, but a string of sightings in Arkansas and Florida has called that assumption into question. Dr. Mennill coordinated a search along the Choctawhatchee River in Florida that has featured one of the largest sound recording efforts in the history of science. The recordings that he and his students have gathered suggest that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers may persist in continental North America. He will present colourful slides and sound recordings to explain this ongoing scientific adventure story. **Kelly Schafer** will also join us with a talk on the **Native Chestnut tree** and the efforts that are being made to aid in its recovery.

November started much the same way it did last year with winter weather in Southern Ontario starting on the 15th. Overall the month was 0.8 degrees Celsius below average with no days after the 15th being above 2.5 degrees Celsius. We had the snowiest fall since 1951. Another 20 cm of snow fell on the night of 19th and 20th. Most of this snow melted on the 27th and 28th of December with temperatures in the low double digits. On January 19th David Philips of the environment Canada weather office stated that it has snowed on every day except five from early November up until this point. The snow is really starting to pile up.

December was a full degree colder than average and the wettest December since 1949. We finished with 1159.5mm of precipitation in 2008 compared to an average of only 904.0mm. This makes it the third highest annual total precipitation in the area since records began back in 1915. This was followed by the coldest January 2009 since 1994 and the sixth coldest **January** since records began in 1915. For the entire month we had a grand total of 3 hours where the temperature was above zero. Hopefully the rest of the winter will be less severe. So far February has been above average in temperature with lots of precipitation in the form of rain. As of writing much of the snow that accumulated has melted. Weather is by far the most important factor affecting bluebird overwintering success and reproductive success. It will not be very long until we start seeing returning bluebirds. There have been numerous reports of overwintering bluebirds in all areas of the Carolinian eco-region over the winter. Now is the time to make sure all your boxes are cleaned out and ready to go. Make sure all ventilation holes are sealed, duct tape can be used for this task and removed later. **The OEBS does not recommend putting ventilation holes in boxes.** The only opening should be the 1.5 inch entrance hole.

OEBS AGM Agenda - Saturday March 14th 2009	
9.00-9.30am	Registration
9.30-10.00am	Business meeting
	Introductions Bill Read
	Slate of Executives for 2009-2010 Tom Kott

	Membership Report- Anne Davidson
	Treasurer's Report- Anne Davidson
	OEBS Display- John Millman
	Presentation of Conservation Award- Don Wills
10.00-10.15am	Bluebirds and meal worms -Don Wills
10.15-1030am	Coffee Break
10.50-1120am	Members nest box reports
11.20-12.10pm	Kelly Schafer American Chestnut tree
12.10-1.30pm	Lunch
1.30-2.30pm	Dr. Daniel J. Mennill The Ivory- billed Woodpecker
2.30-3.00pm	Coffee Break and viewing of bucket raffle items
3.00-3.15pm	TBA
3.15-3.45pm	Bucket raffle

Nest box Reports

The Halton Bluebird Club suffered early losses related to the weather. They were still able to fledge 24 bluebirds from 10 nests with 38 eggs hatching out of 45. Two successful late nests were not recorded until cleanout which would bring their fledged total to at least 30. A total of 178 Tree Swallows also fledged from 235 eggs.

Henry Miller writes from Fort Frances. He saw his first two bluebirds on April 16th and his first 6 Tree Swallows on April 20th. A snowstorm dumped 30cm of snow on April 26th and the temperature plummeted to -11celsius with strong north winds. In town Hundreds of robins adorned trees along city streets. The bluebirds and Tree Swallows disappeared and I assume many perished but we could not find many corpses. Henry tells us it remained below freezing at night until May 9th and it remained cool throughout June and part of July. On June 19 eight pairs of bluebirds and 19 pairs of Tree Swallows filled the bird houses. All the Tree Swallow nestlings were almost ready to fledge while the bluebird nestlings were further behind. They all fledged a week later except for one box where all 5 young bluebirds perished. As far as Henry could tell there were no successful second broods of bluebirds, although many nests in August contained 5 eggs. Most of those eggs were still in the boxes when Henry cleaned them out in September. Henry asks does the decrease in the length of daylight affect the body chemistry (as it does to hares when they change color) and tell them to prepare for migration. Whatever the answer, it has certainly been a different year in 2008 with different results from any of the previous 17-18 years these trails have existed. Henry said the weather was the dominant factor affecting lost eggs and nestlings with House Wrens second.

They have had to relocate many boxes because the area has become overgrown and House Wrens have moved in. One factor Henry attributes to this loss of habitat is the fact the municipalities no longer cut brush along roadsides. Raccoons are not a problem, they are rare in this part of the province. Since we have placed bird houses near pastures and hayfields and away from barns House Sparrows have not taken many boxes (except in 2007 when the population was extremely high).

Henry oversees a number of trails in the Rainy river District with a total of 431 boxes of which 377 are monitored. It takes Henry 3 days and 392 km of driving and countless kilometers of walking to cover all the trails once. He is finding it more difficult and although some volunteers are helping he could use more. A total of 157 Eastern Bluebirds fledged from these boxes. There were 34 unsuccessful nestings mostly related to the cold weather. A total of 25 house wrens fledged and 669 Tree Swallows from 141 broods. Keep up the good work Henry.

Long time members David and Sharon Turner from Markdale fledged 24 young from 30 boxes. Four nestings were lost due to weather. George Third reported one successful nesting on Manitoulin. The number of pairs of bluebirds on his trail has declined from a high point of 12 pairs in 1998. Hopefully 2009 will be a good one. Maureen Riggs from Brighton had a successful year with 44 fledged from 40 boxes despite losing 23 due to the weather. New member Gloria Opzoomer reports one successful bluebird nesting plus 2 nestings of Tree Swallows and one of Black-Capped Chickadee.

David Hampton fledged 135 bluebirds from 31 clutches of eggs on his 64 box trail located in Dufferin County. Barc Dowden of the Ottawa duck club reported 54 young fledged from 60 boxes in Ottawa Carleton. He also reported 8 nestings of House wren and 19 of Tree Swallow.

Elwood M. Jones of Castleton reports 44 young fledged from his 75 boxes with only 2 nests unsuccessful. He found one nest with 10 eggs from which only one fledged. This would probably be from 2 clutches. Some early clutches can be abandoned because of the cold weather. Fourteen bluebirds fledged from Henry Bauer's 14 boxes in Niagara.

Don Bissonnette representing the Essex County Field Naturalists club reports that 171 bluebirds fledged from 31 pairs on their trail of 229 boxes. This collective effort represents the work of over 20 people and is an increase from the 2007 total of 122 bluebird fledgelings. They also reported 156 nestings of Tree Swallow and 26 of house Wren. Wayne and Linda Buck report 13 fledged from 3 pairs of bluebirds near New Hamburg. Patricia Burgon had one nesting of bluebirds and 7 of Tree Swallow from 9 boxes in Grey County. John and Janet Foster fledged 19 young from 4 pairs of bluebirds on their 21 year old trail located in Madoc. They had their highest number of tree Swallows fledged at 153.

Robert O'Donnell had 14 bluebirds fledge from 41 boxes in Renfrew. He reported weather as the culprit in 3 unsuccessful nestings. Kittie Marie and George Fells fledged at least 14 young from their 50 boxes in Dufferin County.

David Lamble fledged 72 bluebirds from 35 pairs on his 434 nest box trail in Wellington County. Dave also had 172 successful nests of Tree Swallow, 4 of House Wren and 2 of Black-Capped chickadee. Dave remarks that this year was the worst year for abandoned nests-about 25% of TRES and 15% of EABL. The cause is unclear but human interference is suspected. House Sparrows were reported as the most important presumed cause of lost eggs or nestlings. 730 Tree Swallows and 91 EABL were banded. Dave also banded 390 of Ken Reger's bluebirds.

Dennis W. Lewington had 98 fledged young from 100 boxes on his trail on the Bruce Peninsula. He stated as did everyone else that weather was the number one presumed cause of lost eggs or nestlings. Dennis uses George Coker's mud room box mounted on t-bars. 187 tree Swallows from 39 nests and 36 house wrens from 6 nests were also reported. Tom Lobb from Clinton had 7 successful nests from his 20 boxes in Huron County. Ron Yorke who has 16 boxes in Dufferin County writes that weather in spring made for a slow start but bluebirds were able to cope surprisingly well. Tree Swallows were much later starting their nests. Three pairs of bluebirds fledged 20 young.

Proposed Slate of OEBS Executive for 2009 - 2010

The nominating committee composed of chair Tom Kott, Anne Davidson and member at large Sylvia Van Walsum propose the following slate of officers for 2009-2010. The officers shall be elected annually at the AGM and shall hold office until the completion of the next AGM or until their successors are elected.

President	Bill Read
Vice-President	Tom Kott
Membership Secretary and Treasurer	Anne Davidson
Conservation Director	Don Wills
Recording secretary	Tom Kott
Director at large	Linda Buck
Director at large	Wayne Buck
Director at large	John Millman

OEBS Website

Barb Ferris is our new website coordinator. Have a look at the changes that have been made. www.oeps.ca

Dues Notice

Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership. For those who have not renewed a green renewal form has been enclosed in your newsletter.

Bailee Birdathon

Sylvia Van Walsum will again be our birdathon Representative. A pledge sheet will be available at our AGM on March 14th. Sylvia was one of the original members back in 1989 and helped out with the NABS AGM hosted by OEBS in 1996. Her support through the years is greatly appreciated.

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society Conservation Award

An award is given out each year to an individual or group that has made an outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation during the previous year. The award will be presented by our conservation chairman Don Wills during the business meeting.

Recipient	Year
George Coker	1995
Leo Smith	1996
Hazel Bird	1997
Don Wills	1998
Sheldon Anderson and Doug Harrison	1999
Norm Shantz	2000
Robert Burton	2001
Halton Bluebird Club	2002
Herb Furniss and Don Parkes	2003
Glanbrook Conservation Committee	2004
Joe Hurst	2005
Barc Dowden Ottawa Duck Club	2006
Gerry Powers	2007

OEBS Display Board

John Millman has designed our new OEBS display board. It will be on display at the AGM on Saturday March 14th. Don Wills built it using a smooth finished plywood and painted it a dark grey color. It can be taken to various events to promote the bluebird society. Thanks to Don and John for putting this wonderful display together.

Charitable Donations

At present we can not issue tax receipts for donations. We are applying for charitable status and hope to have this in place by the fall 2009.

Official Nest Box of the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society

The Dorrie Nest Box designed by Tom Kott now becomes the official nest box of the OEBS. Tom named this box in honour of his late mother-in law Dorrie Anderson. Tom uses wood screws but you can also use stainless steel ardox nails. To prolong the life of your box paint the top and then put a piece of shingle on top with roofing nails and a bit of tar to seal the nail holes. Use a metal pole and affix to box with a u-bolt clamp or drill holes through pole and box and use a nut and bolt to attach. This nest box with pole mount will be on display at our meeting. Number your box with white paint. Boxes should never be put on fence posts or trees, always mount on poles or t-bars. This will be simple and effective. No ventilation holes are necessary. Twinning of boxes is also a good idea. That way you always leave one box open for bluebirds. Use grease on your pole or t-bar to stop raccoons from climbing. The idea behind bluebirding is to provide a predator proof nest box so bluebirds can fledge more young than in natural cavities. Boxes that are put up without proper predator control or monitoring should be removed.

Dorrie Nest Box Plywood Cutting Pattern

By following the attached cutting pattern you will be able to get enough pieces for twelve "Dorrie" type nest boxes from one sheet of 5/8 exterior plywood! The cutting pattern can also be used for other similar designed nest boxes and different thicknesses of plywood.

Safety first! Wear safety glasses and hearing protection when using any power tools.

- 1) First cut one or more 4ft. x 8ft. x 5/8" sheet of exterior plywood in half so you get two 4ft. x 4ft. pcs. This cut can be made using a portable power saw.
- 2) Next cut the half sheet of plywood into the strips as shown. The best way to do this is using a table saw, setting the fence and checking to maintain the strip widths as shown. Note the direction of the grain!
- 3) First cut the four 5-7/8" wide strips.
- 4) Next cut the three 4-5/8" wide strips.
- 5) The remaining strip will give the width required for the roof.
- 6) Using a compound mitre saw, cut the various strips into the front, sides, back and roof as shown.

7) Note that this plan only leaves enough material for four floor pieces per half sheet. Cut pieces of scrap plywood into 4-5/8" x 4-5/8" floor pieces for the remaining pcs. For easier assembly use 3/4" or 1" thick wood for the floor. .

Submitted by T. Kott

Tribute to Hazel Bird

It is with sadness that I inform you of the passing of long time bluebirder and naturalist Hazel Bird of Cobourg, formerly of Harwood, Ontario on Sunday, February 1st 2009 in her 89th year.

Her bluebird trail started on March 2, 1968 when twenty grade 3 and 4 students, their teacher Audrey Wilson and nine enthusiastic members of the Willow Beach field Naturalists (WBFN) met Hazel Bird in Harwood. Their cargo, 25 nest boxes they had constructed in class to help the vanishing bluebird. Hazel had already selected good locations to erect these boxes. By the spring of 1969 another 225 nest boxes were ready to go. With the support of the WBFN's this project was to last another 40 years. Hazel numbered each box to facilitate record keeping and sent each year's records to the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society. As early as July 1970, some 96 bluebird nests were recorded. Hazel faithfully coordinated this program -acting as liaison to local land owners, scheduling volunteers to assist in monitoring the boxes, keeping records and building and locating new boxes as needed. Tree Swallows were tolerated but not House Sparrows who made the mistake of thinking the box was for them. Hazel was the recipient of many well earned and prestigious awards, among them the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society conservation award in 1997. Hazel's biggest sense of success came with the announcement by COSEWIC in 1996 that declared the EASTERN Bluebird as a species not at risk. Hazel retired from the project in 2005. All the boxes were removed and given to the many volunteers that had helped hazel over the years. She did not want them to become sparrow boxes and felt they would be in better hands than leaving them where they were. Hazel was interested in all aspects of nature. She documented in her many note books the unusual plants on the Rice Lake Plain including the Tall Grass Prairie along the south shore of Rice Lake. She introduced Dr. Paul Catling, pre-eminent Canadian botanist, to this area. She also taught outdoor education with her long time friend Audrey Wilson.

Hazel's husband died in an accident when Jerry the youngest of her seven children was only 3 months old. It is a tribute to her that she was able to raise them to become productive happy adults. She was very proud of all of them. Hazel was an all round naturalist who inspired hundreds of budding naturalists with her dedication for and love of nature. Her legacy will live on.

You may sign the guest book by internet at <http://www.maccoubrey.com/schedule.asp?id=1838> The MacCoubrey Funeral home, Cobourg, Ontario. Thanks to Audrey Wilson, Elizabeth Kellogg and Lori Wensley for providing background material.

End –Year Financial Statement

Anne Davidson has compiled the end-year financial statement. Anne has overseen both the member and the executive audits. The member’s audit was done by Audrey Heagy and the executive audit was done by Linda Buck. Both audits found the financial statements present fairly the financial positions of OEBS at December 31, 2008.

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society Balance Sheet As at 12/31/2008

ASSETS	
Cash Assets	
Cash on Hand- Petty Cash	10.39
OEBS Bank Account	663.15
Total Cash Assets	673.54
Investment Assets	
GIC Mature Apr 14/09	1,700.00
GIC Mature June 19/09	5,893.78
Total Investment Assets	7,593.78
TOTAL ASSETS	8,267.32
LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	0.00
Accounts Payable	0.00
Total Current Liabilities	0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	
EQUITY	
Earnings	
Retained Earnings	7,739.91
Current Earnings	527.41
Total Earnings	8,267.32
TOTAL EQUITY	8,267.32
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	8,267.32

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society Income Statement
01/01/2008 to 12/31/2008

REVENUE	
Income	
Membership dues mailed in	1,540.00
Membership dues paid at AGM	230.00
Donations	226.40
AGM - Registration	228.00
AGM - Bucket Raffle	382.00
AGM - Card sales	92.00
AGM - Society books sold	48.50
AGM - Coffee donations	9.28
AGM - From B.Read (10% bk sales)	8.00
Brochures sold	110.00
Matured Inv. Funds retained for use	0.00
BSC - Baillie Birdathon	178.38
Investment Income (GIC Interest)	33.12
Other / Miscellaneous	92.06
Total Income	3,177.74
TOTAL REVENUE	3,177.74
EXPENSE	
Expenses	
Special - New Brochure	1,045.08
Special - Bluebird booklets purch.	327.51
Postage and mailing supplies	513.71
Copying (newsltr / apps / flyers)	371.18
AGM - plaques / engraving	25.42
Web site expense	0.00
Office Supplies	41.19
Bank fees	8.62
Other / Miscellaneous	0.00
Total Expenses	2,650.33
TOTAL EXPENSE	2,650.33
NET INCOME	527.41

Nest box Building Workshop

Saturday April 4th 2009 at the Binbrook Conservation Area Workshop building.
5050 Harrison Rd, Binbrook, Ontario.
Cost is \$5.00 per Bluebird Kit purchased.

Agenda

Registration 8:30 am – 9:00 am

Welcome and introduction of guest speaker 9:00 am

Bluebird talk by Don Wills 9:05 – 9:30 am followed by a 10 minute question and answer session

Break 9:45 am -10 am (to give us time to set up build area)

Building of nest boxes 10:00 am to 10:30 am

Finish and cleanup 10:30 am to 11:15 am.

2010 North American Bluebird Society Conference

The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society will be the host of the 2010 North American Bluebird Society conference at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington on September 10,11 and 12th 2010. More information will be included in the fall 2009 newsletter. Planning committees will be formed to help out with various aspects of the event. Members will be asked to sign up for one of these committees