

2010 Spring Newsletter

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society

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Where has the decade gone? It seems like only yesterday that Y2K was on the minds of almost everyone. The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society has made some major changes during that period. To give us more structure a **constitution** was developed and ratified by a vote of the membership at our spring 2008 annual general meeting. This was followed by a bluebird brochure that **John Millman** was instrumental in putting together for us with the text provided by myself. **Barb Ferris** has updated our website and is doing an excellent job at keeping it up to date. **Mike Sullivan** was the driving force behind establishing a website at the beginning of the decade during my computer illiterate days. I didn't realize at the time just how important it would be in keeping our members informed and enabling other people to learn more about bluebirds. It would not be possible to run the bluebird society without it. I want to thank our executive for the hard work they have put in on behalf of OEBS, and I want to thank our members, many who have stuck with us since the beginning. We would not have a bluebird society without our many members who have dedicated a lot of time and energy not to mention expense to increase bluebird numbers on their nest box trails across Ontario. I will be putting together an HD video this summer that can be added to the website in the future. It will show how to put up a nest box with metal pole and predator protection. Over wintering bluebird numbers are down this winter. The cold weather in May, June and July resulted in a poorer than normal berry crop on most shrubs and fruit trees that bluebirds consume over the winter. Very volatile weather in the United States with record breaking amounts of snow in many areas will probably impact wintering bluebirds negatively in those areas. At one point over the winter every state except Hawaii had snow. It is possible we will see fewer bluebirds return in the spring.

I have enclosed the 2010 North American Bluebird Society AGM registration brochure. This will be held at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington from Thursday, September 9th to Sunday, September 12th. We are hoping that at least 50% of our members are able to attend. This will probably be the last time it is held in our area. We have lined up some excellent speakers and the cost is minimal compared to other conferences of this quality.

We are also having our regular meeting at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington on Saturday, March 13th.

OEBS AGM Agenda March 13th 2010

Royal Botanical Gardens

9:00-9:30 am	Registration	
9:30-10:00 am	Business Meeting	
	• Introductions	Bill Read
	• Slate of Executives for 2010-2011	Tom Knott
	• Membership Report	Anne Davidson

OEBS AGM Agenda March 13th 2010

	• Treasurer's Report	Anne Davidson
	• Presentation of Conservation Award	Don Wills
10:00-10:30 am	Coffee break	
10:30-11:20 am	Members nest box reports	
11:20-12:10 am	Video on Lyme disease	
12:10-1:30 pm	Lunch	
1:30-2:30 pm	Chimney Swifts	Elizabeth van Stam
2:30-3:00 pm	Coffee break & Viewing of bucket raffle items	
3:00-3:15 pm	NABS AGM Volunteer sign up	
3:15-3:45 pm	Bucket Raffle	

Membership renewal

Check the date on your mailing label, it will tell you the year which your membership is paid up to.

Reports from the Field

David Lamble of Fergus had another successful season with 182 bluebirds fledged from 359 boxes in Wellington County. Out of a total of 252 EABL eggs 34 were white which represents 13.5 %. Usually white eggs represent less than 5 %. A total of 45 pair of Eastern Bluebirds were tallied. A total of 253 successful nesting's of Tree Swallows were also recorded with 189 Eastern Bluebirds and 999 Tree Swallows banded.

Kurt Frei of Dundas fledged 25 bluebirds from 5 pair. His bluebird trail of 76 boxes is located mainly in the Dundas valley. A total of 341 Tree Swallows and 48 House Wrens also fledged from these boxes.

Anne Davidson our membership secretary and Treasurer reported 5 bluebirds fledged from one pair. Her trail is in Norfolk County near Delhi.

George and Kittie Fells had 35 bluebirds fledge along with 19 successful nests of Tree Swallows from 47 boxes in Dufferin County.

Felix Ventresca and Aurelio Munoz continue to have success on their trail in Short Hills Park on the Niagara Peninsula. They have increased the total number of bluebirds fledged from 37 in 2000 to 130 in 2009. A total of 212 Tree Swallows also fledged from their 110 boxes.

Long time member **Maureen Riggs** reports fledging 43 bluebirds from her 40 box trail located in Northumberland County near the town of Brighton. Ants and cooler than normal weather were the two problems that she faced over the nesting season.

The **Kawartha Field Naturalists** fledged 62 bluebirds from their 118 nest boxes located in the city of Kawartha lakes (formerly Victoria County) Ten nests were unsuccessful with weather recorded as the number 1 cause of nest failure.

Another long time member **Dennis Lewington** had 73 bluebirds fledge from 90 boxes that he and his wife Gwen monitor in Bruce County. Weather was listed as the number one cause of nest failure. 198 Tree Swallows and 44 House Wrens also fledged from this trail.

Lynda Bere in Middlesex County had 2 families of bluebirds visit her birdbath until late November but none nested. She also had an early nesting of Tree Swallows killed by a House Sparrow.

Jean and Al Burbidge had 14 bluebirds fledge from 10 boxes that they had set up at the fire ridge golf course in Flamborough township north of Hamilton. Eight of the bluebirds were banded by **Bill Read. John Millman** had been instrumental in initiating this project. This is a ideal golf course to set up boxes as it has areas that are not manicured where boxes can be located.

Another long time member **Patricia M .Burgon** from Ancaster had one successful nesting from her 9 boxes in Grey County.

Barc Dowden representing the **Ottawa Duck Club** reports 32 bluebirds fledged from the 77 boxes they monitor. **Jim Sauer, Tony and Gretchen Dunton, Michele LeBoldus and Barc** do the monitoring.

Willie Moore from Norfolk County had one pair of bluebirds that fledged 7 young from two successful nestings. **Lucille Coleman** from the Niagara Region had two successful nests from one pair of bluebirds. One pair of Tree Swallows also fledged young. In two other boxes House Sparrow nest material was removed over the summer to prevent them from nesting.

The Halton Bluebird Club had a very successful year with 44 bluebirds and 147 Tree Swallows fledged. This was despite loss of some nestlings due to cold weather and Tree Swallow interference. A total of 67 bluebird eggs and 196 Tree Swallow eggs were laid.

Linda and Al Thrower report 97 bluebirds fledged and 894 Tree Swallows. Most of their trail is located near Cayuga. The bluebird numbers were down slightly from last year. This can be attributed to colder spring weather and not as many late season nesters. One Tree Swallow that was banded in B.C. was recovered at the Ontario Power Generation Plant at Nanticoke.

Anne Melady reports no luck with her 22 boxes in Huron county. Hopefully this year.

Ron Yorke in Dufferin County had 31 bluebirds fledge from 4 pairs.

John Powers, brother of **Gerard** in Bruce County had 31 bluebirds and 211 Tree Swallows fledge from his 85 boxes. Weather was a factor in that area.

Don Bissonnette from the Essex County Bluebird Committee reports 162 bluebirds fledged from their 185 boxes. Don is part of the Essex County group. Most of the boxes are on metal poles and greased. Don tells us that the number of pairs of bluebirds were down compared to 2008. House Sparrows were the # 1 presumed cause of nest failures. There were 112 successful nests of Tree Swallows.

Long time members **David and Sharon Turner** had 27 bluebirds fledge from 28 boxes that they maintain in grey County. House Wrens and weather were listed as the number one cause of nest failure.

Ken Reger had his best season with 509 bluebirds and 489 Tree Swallows fledged. Ken has 340 boxes on his trail.

David Lamble banded 480 of the 509 bluebirds. Weather and House Sparrows were listed as the Number one presumed cause of nest failures.

Robert O'Donnell had 24 bluebirds from 42 boxes that he monitors in Renfrew County.

John and Janet Foster fledged 17 bluebirds and 135 Tree Swallows from their 22 year old trail in Centre Hasting County near Madoc. Their number one problem was predation by a Black Bear. See the last newsletter for their solution to this problem.

Another long time member **Elwood M Jones** fledged 27 bluebirds from his 65 boxes in Northumberland County. House Wrens and weather were listed as the presumed cause of nest failure. Elwood said it was the worst year for dead young in the boxes. This was probably the result of the colder weather we had which impacted some trails harder than others, especially in Eastern Ontario. He also had some bear problems. His bluebird totals have been much higher in other years.

George Third had 24 bluebirds fledge on his 19 year old trail on Manitoulin Island. He lost 9 young to cold weather. A total of 20 Tree Swallow nests were successful at fledging young.

George Coker 1920-2010



The naturalist community and in particular the bluebird society lost a true champion with the passing of George Coker on January 14th, 2010. George was a member of the Hamilton Naturalist's club, the Bruce Trail Club, the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society and was a life member of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. He participated in many Hamilton Christmas bird counts with Sam Tabone and Ray Hughes. He was born in Toronto of English parents on February 21st, 1920; one of 5 brothers and one sister. In 1932 the family moved from Toronto to the Winona area for the more quiet life on a farm. This is where George met his wife Nellie in 1950. As the story goes, George was visiting a friend who lived next door to Nellie's family home, when he noticed her and asked Nellie's brother if he could meet her. Nellie at the time was doing the dishes and told her brother that if George wanted to talk to her he would have to help her with the rest of the dishes. George agreed and this developed into a life long partnership. Nellie had emigrated with her family from the Netherlands in 1948; she was one of eight children. At the time of George's passing they had been married 58 years and 2 days. George had been solely working his father's fruit farm, but once he met Nellie he also took work in a factory for about four years in order to purchase his own fruit farm in Winona in 1953. George

worked hard on everything he did and Nellie worked right alongside George when she wasn't looking after their two children. Fruit farming is a very labour intensive activity that does not allow for a lot of leisure time. George and his brother Albert had put up some boxes in the thirties and forties with George maintaining a few boxes on his farm through the 1960's and 1970's, being careful not to disturb them while working on the farm. It was during these early years that Nellie can remember hearing George comment on the sweet little chur-wi sound that bluebirds made as he was working in the orchards. He worked initially with Ray Hughes to set up a trail of 60 boxes in the Winona area in 1982. Their trail grew to 120 boxes after he retired from fruit farming. George managed the trail after Ray died in 1993. It was after he sold his farm and retired in 1989 that George was able to more actively pursue his passion for bluebirds. He was a tireless promoter of bluebird conservation and a special box that he designed that he liked to call the "mudroom box". This box was designed to keep the nestlings warm during cold wet weather. From 1982-2005 his trail fledged 1585 Eastern Bluebirds. Even as his health declined and he was no longer able to cut out the boxes his daughter Melinda would carry out this task and George would assemble them. He has distributed many hundreds of nest boxes to bluebird enthusiasts across Southern Ontario. George was presented with the inaugural Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society conservation award in 1995. He was a mentor and inspiration to many in the Niagara and Wentworth area and his contribution to bluebird conservation will long be remembered. You were always welcome at the Coker home. I will remember fondly the conversations about bluebirds, the warm hospitality and the wonderful desserts that Nellie always offered. The bluebird society will miss his warm gentle nature and his tireless passion for bluebirds. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Nellie and family. George is survived by his wife Nellie, a brother and sister, his son George and daughter Melinda and George Junior's wife Esther and their children Grace and Sarah.

Bill Read

Lewis Goodyear 1925-2010

The Bluebird Society mourns the loss of Lewis Goodyear, who died on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, in his 86th year. Lewis worked with Sheldon Anderson and Dave Rayner maintaining a bluebird trail in Dufferin County near Orangeville, he also had boxes on his own property and on his daughter's property across the road from Lewis. He was a former member of the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society. It was around 1990 that he was introduced to Eastern Bluebirds. He was captivated by them and spent much of his retirement years working with them. He loved the bluebirds because of their delicate nature and would wait with anticipation for their return in the spring. Lewis, Dave and Sheldon would plan their monitoring trips around his kitchen table. He was born January 11th, 1925 in Lumsden, Newfoundland and served with the merchant marines during World War 2. He moved to Ontario in his twenties and worked as a Pipe fitter for all of his adult life, a job which had him travel all over Ontario. He married his wife Eileen in 1970 and they adopted three children Radeana, Matthew and Larissa. The family moved to the Orangeville area in 1979. He wanted his legacy and love for bluebirds to live on and has asked that donations be made to the bluebird society in his name. What we do for ourselves dies with us, what we do for others is immortal.

Ken Burgess 1929-2009

The bluebird society mourns the passing of Ken Burgess who died on November 17th, 2009 in Burlington. Ken was born in Windsor on July 6th, 1929. He was a former member of the Hamilton Tiger Cats football team. Ken came to several Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society annual meetings over the years. He was involved with Bronte Creek Provincial Park (educational programs and I think in its creation) from the beginning, and was one of the

founding members of the Halton Bluebird Club in the late 1980's. He wanted to get nest boxes up for Eastern Bluebirds, and was instrumental in the setup of the first monitored trail in Bronte Creek Provincial Park. He monitored the boxes for many years, until his hip and knee problems sidelined him. He still came along when Sylvia van Walsum was first banding the young bluebirds, only he would drive from box to box and just walk a few steps with his cane or walking stick. You may remember Ken's enthusiasm during OEBS bucket raffles: He would call out "BINGO!!!" whenever he won a raffle prize! In the past several years, Ken's diabetes gave him health difficulties, and he lived at Tansley woods long term care facility the last few years. Our condolences to his wife Greta and Family.

Sylvia van Walsum
Bill Read

Audubon Christmas Bird Counts

These counts done on an annual basis since 1900 can tell us about the status of the Eastern Bluebird in North America. Eastern Bluebird numbers in Ontario on the 110th CBC (2009-2010) will be down considerably from last year's 109th CBC count when 703 EABL were tallied on 31 counts.(Some counts for the 110th CBC have not reported as of writing, numbers will be slightly higher.) This decline can be attributed to unseasonably cold weather during the summer which resulted in very poor wild fruit crops. Most bluebirds have migrated probably to search out better winter food sources. Below are the 1901-2009 counts for Eastern Bluebird in Ontario and for all Christmas Bird Counts in the US. Bluebird numbers on Ontario CBC's start increasing in the late 1980's. A warming trend in Southern Ontario in the 1980's and 1990,s may be partly responsible for this increase. (David Philips, Senior Climatologist, Environment Canada Weather Office. Pers. Com). Bluebirds in Ontario over- winter in the Carolinian region along the north shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario. Why did bluebirds start over-wintering in Ontario? During the first half of the twentieth century Eastern Bluebirds were not seen during the winter months despite the fact they were common during spring and fall migration and during the breeding season. The first bluebirds recorded on a CBC in Ontario were in 1951. They were then seen in small numbers on an irregular basis up to around 1985 when they started to increase in numbers. Today they are classified as an uncommon winter resident.

CBC Ontario	# of Eastern Bluebirds	# of counts recorded on	# of Observers on counts where bluebirds were recorded
110	294	14	NA
109	703	31	1036
108	484	19	627
107	511	30	961
106	580	23	810
105	223	14	464

CBC Ontario	# of Eastern Bluebirds	# of counts recorded on	# of Observers on counts where bluebirds were recorded
104	547	19	646
103	779	26	867
102	408	20	644
101	495	23	723
100	627	19	674
99	470	21	706
98	269	14	499
97	252	18	594
96	136	12	414
95	128	15	467
94	139	6	229
93	168	15	486
92	329	17	530
91	59	10	287
90	140	14	399
89	73	9	317
88	62	7	248
87	80	9	317
86	24	3	143
85	44	10	321
84	22	5	139
83	6	5	185
82	7	3	125
81	10	4	142

CBC Ontario	# of Eastern Bluebirds	# of counts recorded on	# of Observers on counts where bluebirds were recorded
80	9	1	13
79	0	0	0
78	10	1	46
77	18	3	132
76	12	2	64
75	15	5	151
74	7	2	67
73	29	6	156
72	8	4	124
71	1	1	26
70	1	1	42
69	12	2	18
68	4	1	6
67	0	0	0
66	4	1	10
62-65	0	0	0
61	4	2	91
59-60	0	0	0
58	3	2	46
56-57	0	0	0
55	1	1	15
54	7	2	92
53	26	4	83
52	0	0	0
51	14	3	103
1-50	0	0	0

110th CBC -Dec-17, 2009- Jan 5th, 2010

CBC US	# of Eastern Bluebirds	# of counts recorded on	# of Observers on counts where bluebirds were recorded
110	NA	NA	NA
109	86461	968	24572
108	81423	956	23780
107	95077	971	24479
106	73459	952	22918
105	73432	869	21328
104	60768	863	21172
103	93076	916	23166
102	86518	879	22196
101	66712	838	19316
100	82027	846	20828
99	76094	791	19303
98	64420	776	19644
97	59924	737	17545
96	64967	741	18349
95	66928	741	17998
94	56707	737	17422
93	65583	729	17183
92	63477	693	16424
91	52970	666	15793
90	44722	683	15408

CBC US	# of Eastern Bluebirds	# of counts recorded on	# of Observers on counts where bluebirds were recorded
89	45812	640	15597
88	43818	600	14183
87	42952	581	14387
86	34542	562	15537
85	34239	558	14732
84	27176	517	14013
83	30766	510	14049
82	20508	469	12130
81	20392	468	12208
80	16639	419	11146
79	11964	374	9855
78	14569	409	10755
77	16996	431	11317
76	14888	432	11199
75	12673	403	9965
74	10518	355	7531
73	12432	380	7929
72	11567	358	7252
71	8552	309	5838
70	7555	297	5305
69	6899	267	4203
68	5528	258	4398
67	7858	265	5205
66	8932	283	5156
65	7795	262	4844

CBC US	# of Eastern Bluebirds	# of counts recorded on	# of Observers on counts where bluebirds were recorded
65	7795	262	4844
64	5372	229	4008
63	5907	225	3801
62	3427	208	3550
61	3332	199	3475
60	8058	236	3657
59	6632	228	3521
58	10354	234	3324
57	7118	211	2985
56	9516	219	3100
55	8907	230	3618
54	9288	230	3508
53	6023	188	2802
52	4813	179	2341
51	5371	198	2636
50	6508	193	2623
49	4656	149	1822
48	4209	139	1647
47	205	8	77

Discussion number of observers -are the total number of observers on each count that saw bluebirds. A better way of analyzing this would be to take the total number of observers in areas where bluebirds might be found and then look at how many bluebirds were recorded. This would give us a better idea of increase or decrease. For Ontario on the 109th count 703 bluebirds were seen on 31 counts with 1036 observers in those 31 count areas. Several weather events in the last 10 years have impacted bluebird numbers, the ice storm of 2003 and the prolonged cold of early spring 2007 in northeastern North America. Both of these events resulted in substantial declines on the following year Christmas bird counts. The second

highest total on US CBC's was recorded on the 2002-2003 counts (103rd count) with a total of 93,076 bluebirds. That number declined to 60,768 on the 104th count, a drop of 32,308 bluebirds. By the 107th count they had rebounded to a new high of 95,077 only to be hit with the unseasonably cold weather of spring 2007 which resulted in heavier than normal mortality of adults in the northern part of their range. The following years count in the US declined to 81,423 a drop of 13,654 bluebirds. With climatic changes producing more volatile weather events these fluctuations in numbers will probably continue in the future. Predator proof nest box trails will give bluebirds the ability to rebound to their former numbers in the years following these declines.

Bluebird Field Trip 2010

The bluebird field trip is on Saturday, May 22, 2010. We will meet at Orchard Home at 9:30am. If you would like to attend this trip please phone or email me at info@billreadsbooks.com or 519 620 0744 to confirm. The trip is open to anyone who is a member of the bluebird society. Membership is \$10 and an application form can be downloaded from our website at www.oebs.ca

Why do birds collide with windows in urban areas?

Collisions with windows cause more bird deaths than any other human-related factor, other than habitat destruction: in the U.S. alone, an estimated one billion birds are killed each year by colliding with glass. Under the right lighting condition, glass can reflect trees or sky or other scenery, or allow birds to see things on the other side of the glass, fooling the birds into thinking they can fly to those areas by flying into the glass. Sadly, most collisions are fatal-even birds that fly away often die later. As part of a long term effort to find the causes of these collisions and to develop solutions, Dr. Klem and his colleagues compiled information on the construction and landscaping of 73 buildings in New York City. They also checked each building daily for 58 days in the spring, looking for birds that had died from window strikes. They found 475 birds of 50 species in the fall (82% died) and 74 birds of 25 species in the spring (85% died). The authors concluded that, at least in urban areas, the number of bird-glass collisions could be reduced by using less glass (especially reflective glass) in new construction, and by landscaping with low-growing vegetation/or by eliminating shrubs and trees from areas close to buildings with glass. Klem, D.Jr.C.J Farmer, N.Delacretaz, Y.Gelb, and P.G. Saenger. 2009. Architectural and Landscape Risk Factors Associated with Bird-Glass Collisions in an Urban Environment. The Wilson Journal of Ornithology. 12:126-134.

Editor's comment The fatal light Awareness Program (FLAP) in Toronto have been doing research on bird strikes in urban areas for at least 15 years. You can learn more about this by going to their website.

2009 Bailee Birdathon

Sylvia Van Walsum raised \$830.00 dollars as our representative for the Baillie Birdathon. Twenty-five percent or \$207.50 of the money raised goes to the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society. This is a record amount, thanks Sylvia for your hard work on behalf of Bird Studies Canada and the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society.