Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society

2011 Spring Newsletter Editor Bill Read info@billreadsbooks.com

The AGM is set for Saturday, March 12th, 2011 at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington. Next years meeting is scheduled for Saturday March 17th, 2012 at the same location. In the last newsletter I predicted that over wintering bluebirds would be in high numbers. This was based on the abundant berry crops that were produced in Ontario last summer. Usually when this happens more bluebirds stay in Ontario during the winter months. This did not happen, bluebirds recorded on most CBC's were down or absent from previous years. The past two years of breeding success have been average to below average and I suspect that Eastern Bluebird numbers are down somewhat in North Eastern North America from the high point on the 107th CBC of 95,077 bluebirds. (US counts only) Bluebirds from Ontario that over wintered in the US may have suffered higher than normal mortality and this could also be a factor in somewhat lower numbers. The latest year that numbers are available is the 110th (2009-2010 - US only) CBC which recorded a total of 80,105 bluebirds on 952 counts with 23,284 observers on those counts. In Ontario on the 110th count 505 bluebirds were recorded from 22 counts. Bluebird numbers are not available for the 2010-2011 CBC. By the time you receive this newsletter the first bluebirds may have already returned if they did not over winter. January 2011 has been cold with the temperature for the month 2 degrees Celsius below the long term average. We had 4 days where it went below -20 degrees Celsius at night. This was the first time since mid-2009 when we have had 2 below average months in a row. December 2010 was 1.5 degrees Celsius lower than average and the coldest December in 10 years and the driest in 15.

The big weather story for the year in the region of Waterloo (which represents the weather for most of Southern Ontario) were the consistently warm temperatures that led to 2010 coming in as the 5th warmest year ever at 1.4 degrees Celsius above average. Eleven of the 12 months were higher than average with December the only colder than average month. It was unfortunate that one of the few cold periods came during the first part of the month of May- 2010 at a critical time in the bluebird nesting cycle. I mentioned in the 2010 fall newsletter that on the 5th and 6th of May temperatures were below freezing, the correct dates were the 9th and 10th of May. This below average weather from May 6th to May 13th -2010 caused widespread nestling mortality across Southern Ontario. Weather above all else has the greatest impact on bluebird success or failure during the nesting season.

OEBS AGM AGENDA MARCH 12th 2011.

8.15-9.00 am

Registration

9.00-9.30 am

Business Meeting

Introductions Bill Read

Slate of Executives for 2011 Tom Kott Membership report Anne Davidson

Treasurer's Report Anne Davidson
Announcement of Conservation Award Don Wills
Coffee Break
Pictures NABS 2010. Bill Read
Members nest box reports
History of the EABL in Ontario - Bill Read
Lunch a limbands of a footed saw side and an algui
Myles Falconer- Bank Swallow Colonies on Lake Erie.
Coffee break and viewing of bucket raffle items
ROM Nest Record Card System- Brad Clements
Bucket Raffle- Tom Hunt

Membership Fees

We have been able to keep the membership dues at \$10 per year which covers the cost of producing the newsletter and mailing it out. Many members have also made donations in addition to the yearly fee and I sincerely thank them. We would not have a bluebird society without the generosity of our members, many who have stuck with us since the bluebird society was formed in 1988. We now have charitable status and tax receipts are issued for any amount of \$10 and over. The year on your newsletter mailing label indicates the year to which dues are paid up to.

Newsletter Articles- If you have a newsworthy article about bluebirds or other cavity nesters send it along and I will put it in the newsletter. See contact above.

Baillie Birdathon

Long time member **Sylvia van Walsum** and her husband **William Poaps** have again agreed to represent the OEBS on the 2011 Baillie Birdathon. Last year they raised a record 906.50 of which 25% or \$226.63 goes back to the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society. Many thanks for this fine effort. You can pledge a flat amount or so much per species to me at info@billreadsbooks.com and I will forward it to Sylvia or a pledge sheet will be available at our AGM on March 12th. **A special thanks to all our members who supported Sylvia and Bert on behalf of OEBS on Birdathon.**

Bluebird Banding in Orchards- Bill Read

As most of you know I band bluebirds in my nest boxes, both adults and young. I use a special in box trap to catch the adults which is closely monitored when set up. As soon as an adult is caught I remove it immediately for banding or recording the band number. I use a 1B band or a size 1 on some adults determined by a leg gauge. All young are banded using 1 B's. Only nests where the young have hatched do I attempt to band adults. There is a slight chance the adult female will abandon the nest if very early in incubation. This year I may have 3 six year old bluebirds (2-females and 1-male) returning. All nested successfully in 2010 and all in apple orchards. Two of

bluebirds mentioned above (one from Box A-1 and one from Box DR-5) were retrapped in orchard Home in 2010. **ASY female 1791-26766** first showed up in the Howell orchard in 2008. **ASYM 1431-59388** has always nested in Orchard Home from 2006 on. Below are the reproductive events for both these birds during the time they have been re-trapped from 2006-2010.

Female ASY 1791-26766 Banded near Sparta - HY sex unknown July 29, 2005 by Bob Hubert. This female first showed up in the Howell orchard in 2008 which is adjacent to Orchard Home.

- 1. Howell Orchard -First nesting -2008 fledged 4 -young Howell Orchard- second nesting -2008 fledged 4-young
- 2. 2009- Not re-trapped in either orchard.
- 3. 2010 2 nesting's in Orchard Home Fledged 7 young. (see separate sheet)

Male ASY 1431-59388 First banded in Orchard home in 2006 as AHYM.

- 1. **2006 -Orchard Home Box 37** nesting- **fledged 5 -young**. A first earlier nesting in Box 35 nearby fledging 3-young was probably the same pair and a possible third nesting in box 37 (July 21-renest 3-eggs) as well. Family issues in 2006 prevented me from recapturing the birds and confirming their identity at the other two nesting's.
- **2. 2007- Orchard Home Box WA-8 6-young fledged**. Another probable nesting in Box 36 5-young fledged- Male not recaptured.
- **3. 2008- Orchard Home** Recaptured at 2 different nesting's **6-young Fledged** Boxes 84 and WA-8.
- 4. 2009-Orchard Home Box WA-8 2 nesting's 9-Young Fledged.
- **5. 2010- Orchard Home Box A-1** 2 nesting's **7-Young Fledged** (see separate sheet)

This male has been quite prolific producing at least 33 young over the 5 years and possibly as many as 44 young. I hope he returns in 2011. This is a sprayed orchard but biological controls are also used in both orchards for Oriental fruit moth and codling moth. Pheromones are released from these devices which confuse the males into thinking they are females preventing them from mating with the real females. Herbicides, fungicides and insecticides are also used. Honey bees are brought into the orchards during blossom for pollination.

One of the things I will do is compare reproductive results of know age birds in these orchards with non orchard sites. As birds age are they more or less productive? Are there other reproductive problems or changes in behaviour? How does this compare with non orchard sites? For example, if we take the reproductive results of the two 5 year old birds above in 2010 we would have 4 reproductive events producing 14 young or 3.5 young per nesting. Both females and males would be separated in future analysis. This would have to be compared to reproductive results

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for same age birds in non-sprayed sites and the sample size would have to be large enough to be statistically significant. I have many boxes in locations other than apple orchards and all these birds are banded as well. From what we see above they nest very successfully in these orchards. This also tells us something about the health of the orchard and the apples in it. Over the last 20 years that I have had nest boxes in the orchards the spray regime has changed, insecticides today tend to be more specific to a certain insect pest at a certain time in its life cycle. Blanket spraying at regular intervals is not done anymore. Both these orchards use an Integrated Pest Management approach. Scouts from the Norfolk apple growers search the orchards to determine insect levels and only recommend spraying when pest levels reach a certain threshold. Another reason not to spray unless necessary is so beneficial insects can do their work preying on the insect pests. Spraying can also harm the beneficial insects. This is an example of how banding can be used to study the dynamics of bluebird populations

Reports from the field 2010

Dennis and **Gwen Lewington** fledged 46 bluebirds from their 84 boxes in Bruce County. Dennis uses the George Coker mud room box on his trail. Weather was recorded as the number 1 presumed cause for nest failure.

David Lamble was able to fledge 61 bluebirds from the 394 nest boxes on his trail. His boxes are located in Wellington County. Successful nesting's of other species include 186 Tree Swallow, 7 House Wren and 5 Black Capped Chickadee.

The **Halton Bluebird Club** fledged 38 bluebirds from the 70 nest boxes they monitor in Bronte Provincial Park. They also had 134 Tree Swallows fledge from 33 nests and one successful nest of Black Capped Ckickadees.

Jerry and Joan Asling monitor a trail of 460 boxes located in Grey and Bruce counties. They have been maintaining a trail in this area for 15 years and at one time had over 500 boxes. The trail goes from Lake Huron in the West to Paisley in the North and just below Hanover in the south. They had 58 successful bluebird nests that fledged 143 bluebirds. Tree Swallows took 168 of the boxes and fledged 681 young. House Wrens fledged 41 young from 10 boxes and Black Capped Chickadees fledged 11 young from 3 nests.

Anna Rudy who maintains a trail of 16 boxes in Waterloo County fledged 17 bluebirds. She started her trail with 3 boxes in 2000. Weather and House Sparrows were listed as the main problems on her trail.

Long time bluebirder **Henry Miller** from Fort Frances fledged 227 bluebirds. The 324 boxes (105 boxes are monitored by other volunteers) are located in the District of Rainy River. Henry monitors 219 of these boxes. This trail also had 112 successful nesting's of Tree Swallows and 12 of House Wrens. **Henry writes the following**.

Warm weather was early this year, with temperatures in the mid twenties most of April and May. (usually freezes with snow flurries well into May). Birds began nesting 2-3 weeks earlier than usual. Bluebird second broods were successful. I have fewer bluebird trails. I have removed many boxes as brush is growing along the roadsides where boxes are located. The municipalities no longer cut the brush. The numbers in the report do not reflect the numbers in all trails as some of those who volunteered did not monitor often enough to get accurate results. All 324 boxes were monitored, but I used only the results of the 219 which I looked after and those the youth of OFAH Get Outdoors Club checked. There is very little need for predator control as House Sparrows seldom use the boxes (to far from houses or barns). Two species of snakes, Red Bellied and Garter Snake are common but do not disturb the nests. There are some raccoons in towns and near market Gardens and rivers. They are never allowed to increase their population as the farmers trap or shoot them. This is the first year that vandalism has occurred in the 20 years I have been monitoring the trails. The bird houses are of variable sizes and colour. As I have reported previously, the students of several schools constructed them. In many cases we used different colours and constructed different sizes as an experiment to find out nesting preferences. After all, although we targeted bluebirds other cavity nesting birds also need a place to nest. Thanks Henry and keep up the good work.

Chris Grooms had 8 successful nesting's of bluebirds from the 48 boxes he monitors in Frontenac County. House Sparrows were listed as the number 1 presumed cause of nest failure.

Our treasurer and membership secretary **Anne Davidson** had one successful nesting with 5 young from the 4 boxes she monitors in Norfolk County.

Lorne Smith and **Bob Hunt** had another successful year with 300 fledged bluebirds from 654 boxes. The boxes are located in Grey and Bruce counties. A total of 71 pairs of bluebirds were represented on this trail. Weather was listed as the number 1 presumed cause of nest failure.

Ken Reger fledged 477 bluebirds from the 340 boxes he maintains in Waterloo County. He also fledged 609 Tree Swallows, 24 Black Capped Chickadees and 6 House Wren. David Lamble banded 445 of the bluebirds and 609 of the Tree Swallows. Ken lost 68 bluebirds to House Sparrows, 52 to cold weather in May and 20 to Raccoons. Ken writes that in my area (Farms) English Sparrows are a major problem (I use a lot of sparrow spookers) All the nest boxes I now make are slot boxes. He also writes that he had 79 dead adult Tree Swallows found in boxes mostly when the weather was warm and relates this to scours. All were found in empty boxes. Editors note. Several reasons have been put forward, one that the Tree Swallows in deeper boxes are unable to climb to the entrance hole and become trapped in the box. I have encountered this in the past early in the nesting season. I come to a deeper box, open it and find a dead TRES and some that are still alive. The bottom of the box is covered with a green yellow material from defication. Once the

door is open they all fly out. Why were they not able to do this with the door closed? Bluebirds can get out of any nest box. Tree Swallows have great difficulty in deeper boxes. I make sure that the inside front of the box has grooves or something they can grab a hold of. Smooth plywood is the worst.

Another long time member **Elwood Jones** reports fledging 30 bluebirds from the 70 nest boxes he monitors on a weekly basis in Northumberland County. Out of the 62 eggs that were laid 5 were white.

Robert O'Donnell fledged 6 bluebirds from 1 successful nesting in Renfrew County. His trail consists of 42 nest boxes.

Don Bissonnette, coordinator of the Essex County Field Naturalist's Club's bluebird committee reports that 144 bluebirds fledged from 172 nest boxes. Successful nesting's of other species included 17 House Wren and 115 Tree Swallow. House Sparrows and House Wrens ranked 1 and 2 as the number 1 presumed cause of nest failure. Don was awarded the 2010 OEBS conservation award at the North American Bluebird Society AGM in September 2010 which was hosted by our club. Congratulations Don.

Ron Yorke who maintains 16 nest boxes in Dufferin County fledged 23 bluebirds. Ron also had 6 nests of Tree Swallows and 1 of House Wren. House Wrens and Weather ranked as the number 1 presumed cause of nest failure on his trail. Kathy Sayeau fledged 6 young from two nesting's in the County of Norfolk. This pair was fed meal worms during the nesting. She only had 1 egg in the second nest; the House Wrens probably removed the other eggs.

Ruth and Vic Orr sent in the following report on behalf of the Kawartha Field Naturalists. 107 bluebirds fledged from their 157 monitored nest boxes. Successful nesting's of other species include 20 House Wren, 35 Tree Swallow and 8 Black Capped Chickadee. House Wrens, weather, Flying Squirrels and Black Bears were recorded as the number 1 cause of nest failure

Lynda Bere had 1 successful nesting of bluebirds in her garden with 4 young from her 3 nest boxes in Middlesex County. House Sparrows nests were removed before eggs could be laid.

Jean Burloidge fledged 9 young from 3 successful nestings. The nest boxes are located on the **Dragon's Fire golf club** which she and **Al** live beside. **Jean and Al's** friend and former OEBS executive **John Millman** was instrumental in getting this trail going. John passed away on June 12th, 2010 and he is sorely missed by all of us. **Maureen Wilsack** fledged 4 young from 1 successful nesting on her 3 nest box trail in the County of Lincoln.

Helene Dutka had no nesting's of bluebirds from her 6 boxes in Halton County in 2010. She also reported that Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows were also down in numbers.

Ruth Urbanek in Port Elgin had two families of bluebirds that fledged 7 young. She plans to put up another box for 2011. They were fed meal worms through out. **See**

our website for the contact for meal worms. They will cost as much as 20 times more if purchased through a pet store.

Margaret Kalogeropoulos who joined OEBS in December 2009 helps with the monitoring on the trail of Felix Ventresca and Aurelio Munoz in Short Hills Provincial Park. For more information on this trail see the article on bluebirds in Niagara Birds by John Black and Kayo Roy.

Long Time member of OEBS Maureen Riggs of Northumberland County reports 34 bluebirds fledged from 40 nest boxes. Maureen uses grease on metal poles to stop climbing predators. House Wrens and weather were listed as the main problems in 2010.

In a report prepared by Marion Robertson, Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Wellington County report no bluebirds fledged from the 18 boxes set up on the property. They did fledge 15 Tree Swallows and 10 Black Capped Chickadees. Patricia Burgon had 7 successful nests of Tree Swallows from her 9 boxes in Grey County but no bluebirds this year.

Movie makers **John** and **Janet Foster** fledged 13 bluebirds and 86 Tree Swallows from the 40 nest boxes they have on their farm near Madoc in Centre Hastings County. They had 12 nest failures of Tree Swallows that were weather related but most re-nested. Many Tree Swallows in Southern Ontario had initial failures because of the weather but most re-nested successfully. House Wrens, blowflies, weather and a bear were listed as possible causes of nest failures.

Lucille Coleman fledged 13 bluebirds from the 49 boxes she has in Niagara. House Wrens, raccoons, and House Sparrows were listed 1-2-3 as probable causes of nest failures. A total of 58 Tree swallows and 5 House Wrens also fledged.

Willie Moore who has 6 boxes in Norfolk County had 1 successful nesting of bluebirds that fledged 5 young. Willie has had boxes out for the past 26 years. He also had successful nesting's of Tree Swallows and House Wrens.

George Third has 50 boxes on a trail on Manitoulin Island. He fledged 14 bluebirds and had 20 successful nesting's of Tree Swallows. George has weather as the number 1 presumed cause of nest failure.

Long time members **David** and **Sharon Turner** had 28 bluebirds fledge from the 37 nest boxes they monitor in Grey County. Weather was listed as the number 1 presumed cause of nest failure. Successful nesting's of other species included 21 Tree Swallow, 2 House Wren and 1 Black Capped Chickadee. No House Sparrows were seen near the boxes.

Cathie Patterson from Simcoe County had 6 bluebirds fledge from her 17 boxes. To protect from climbing predators she uses PVC pipe on the pole and a steel shield which is effective. Cathie had 1 successful nesting of Tree Swallow and 2 of Black Capped Chickadees. Weather and blowflies were listed as the number 1 presumed cause of nest failures. She wrote the following- Most of my boxes are used by Tree Swallows. I noticed a significant decrease in their numbers this year and the cold

snap killed most of their young. Thankfully most of the Tree Swallows that failed on first nests in Southern Ontario re-nested.

Al and Linda Thrower banded 447 Tree Swallows and 45 House Wrens from the nest box Trail they monitor on the grounds of the Ontario Power Generating station at Nanticoke in Haldimand County.

Christine Madliger monitored 91 nest boxes at Ruthven near Cayuga in Haldimand County. A total of 329 Tree Swallows fledged from these boxes. Bluebirds were not monitored at this site in 2010.

Thanks to everyone for submitting their reports. As we all know it takes a tremendous amount of time and effort to properly maintain a bluebird trail. The OEBS will not endorse bluebird trails that do not have full predator proofing of nest boxes.

How do cavity nesters stay warm in cold winters?

Instead of retreating to warm, sunny climes, some cavity nesting birds tough out the winter in cold regions. Some species such as the Carolina Chickadee, spend those cold winter nights inside a cozy tree cavity. But is it really warmer in there? If so, what characteristics of the tree make it warmer? Researchers in Ontario, Canada collected temperature data and made every conceivable measurement of nest cavities and cavity trees, and subjected all of it to some complex statistical analysis. It turns out that, yes, it's warmer inside a tree cavity in winter, but only at night – it's actually colder for most of the daylight hours, because it takes a long time for the air inside the cavity to warm up.

And orientation of the cavity, ie; the direction it faces? It doesn't make much difference. Neither does the diameter of the opening, volume of the cavity, or height above ground. The two most important features of the tree that make it warmer inside at night are the diameter and its condition. Larger trees buffer the cold better – no surprise there, but what is surprising is that large trees are better at retaining their warmth at night than dead trees. This is probably because of the fluids present in the bark and inner layers of the

tree. – the fluids keep the cavity warmer at night because they slow down heat loss through the tree trunk. For years wildlife biologists have been promoting the idea of including the protection of dead, standing trees in forest management plans to provide nest sites for cavity nesters. In light of this study, it's clear that live cavity trees need to be protected, too, because of their value to overwintering cavity nesters.

Coombs, Andrea B; Jeff Bowman, and Colin J.Garroway.2010. Thermal Properties of Tree Cavities During Winter in a Northern Hardwood Forest. Journal of Wildlife Management 74:1875-1881.

Box WA-9 first nesting 2341-53545 SYM (1) new 2341-53546 SYF (1) new 4-young

Box 12 first nesting SYM 2341-53318 (1) AHYF not recaptured 3-young

Box DR-5 second nesting SYM 2341-53318 (1) ASYF 1791-26766 (5) Sparta 2005 4-young

> Box A-1 first nesting Box A-1 Second nesting ASYM 1431-59388 (5) ASYM 1431-59388(5) ASYF 2261-13742 (2) ASYF 2261-13742 (2) 4-young

1431-59388 banded Orchard Home AHYM June 18'2006

See breeding record in newsletter.

Box 5 first nesting 5 eggs - disappeared Box -5 second nesting Box-5 Third nesting ASYM-2341-53544(new) ASYM-2341-53544(2+) AHYF not recaptured ASYF-2341-53260 (2) 3-young 4-young

3-young

Box 9 First nesting SYM -2161-20501(new) (1) SYF-2341-53371 (1) 4-young

> Box-47 First nesting SYM-2341-53590 (new) (1) ASYF-2341-53262 (2) 5-young

Box-16 first nesting ASYM 2261-13579(3) ASYF 2261-13480(3) 2-young Box-16 Second nesting ASYM 2261-13579 (3) ASYF 2261-13480 (3) 5-young

Box-82 first nesting SYF 2341-53163 (1) ASYM 2261-13685 (2) 4-young Box-82 second nesting SYF 2341-53163 (1) ASYM 2261-13685 (2) 3-young

Box 81 First nesting SYM 2431-85643 (1) New SYF 2341-53304 (1) Banded Howell July4, 2009 LF 3-young

9 pairs produced 51 young or 5.67 per pair in 2010

Orchard Home Front of Orchard - Howell Road

Howell back of Orchard

Box -21 First nesting
SYM 2341-53372 (1)
SYF 2341-53441 new (1)
4-young
Box-21 second nesting
SYF 2341-53441 (1)
AHYM not Recaptured
2-young

Box P-2 first nesting ASYF 2261-13659 (2) ASYM 2261-13477 (3) 1-young (cold)

BoxC3-24- second nesting ASYF 2261-13659(2) ASYM 2261-13477 (3) 4-young See P-2 first nesting

Box-P-2 first nesting SYM 2341-53345 (1) SYF 2341-53567 new(1) 4-young

Box -2 first nesting SYF 2341-53164 (1) AHYM not recaptured 2-young

> Box 61-first nesting SYF 2341-53585 new (1) SYM 2341-53315 (1) 5-young

Box-H5 second nesting ASYF 2341-53491 new (2+) SYM 2341-53347 (1)

Box-69 First nesting -4-young-April 22 nest failure probable cold

Box A-4 third nesting ASYF 2341-53491 new (2+) SYM 2341-53347 (1) 4-young

6 Pairs produced 30 young or 5 young per pair in 2010.

OEBS FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR 2010

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21,516.9
PENSE 21,516.9 Costs
PENSE eting Costs
PENSE costs
eting Costs
eting Costs
M - Premises - Speaker - Food 431.90
M - Plaques/Engrave/Print 25.54
3S 2010 Conference Payouts 12,849.47
3S Preparation Expenses 927.35
3S Visa/MCd Fees 690.66
3S Other 106.90
er 72.67
al Meeting Costs 15,104.4
erating Costs
chures 1,783.32
tage and mailing supplies 1,013.91
ying newsletter / apps / flyers 690.72
site expense 647.96
k fees 107.29
er / Miscellaneous Expense 9.01
al Operating Costs 4,252.2
AL EXPENSE <u>19,356.7</u>
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