



Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society

2022 Fall Newsletter ~ Editor Bill Read

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Welcome to the 2022 fall newsletter. I am pleased to announce that we will hold an in person AGM at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington on **Saturday March 18, 2023**. More details to follow in the Spring newsletter. Admission will be \$10 per person.

The 2022 breeding season will go down as one of the best years ever for both Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows. Weather was a huge factor as it was cold in April which resulted in fewer bluebirds nesting too early as they have done the last two years. As an example the Eva Chapin box on West River Road laid their first egg on April 16, last year it was April 1. It appeared that clutch sizes were smaller for first broods this year. And they were. Average clutch sizes for nests initiated before June 1 was 4.86 eggs per nest in 2021 and 4.63 eggs for 2022. Not sure why that was, possibly the cold weather in late April influenced clutch size. I calculated average first egg dates in April for both 2021 and 2022. In 2021 it was April 17th and in 2022 it was April 23. This is a 6 day difference which did make a huge difference in reproductive success when comparing both years. This later first egg date combined with warm weather in May created ideal conditions for nest box success. The rest of the summer was also ideal for nest box success. The number of pairs of returning bluebirds was also higher this year on most well managed nest box trails. My final count was 88 pairs. Last year it was 64 pairs. There were just more bluebirds this year. Most reports indicate that on well managed trails Tree Swallows also had a successful year.

House Wrens remain as the number 1 reason more bluebirds were not successful. Many bluebird nests were lost to House Wren egg removal. The best strategy is to not let them nest. If after either bluebirds or Tree Swallows have fledged and it looks like a House Wren is about to nest, cover the nest hole with a wood cover. House Wrens are a federally protected species under the migratory bird act and their nests, eggs and young cannot be tampered with. Putting a cover over the nest hole before they attempt to nest does not violate any of the above. The House Wrens are forced to move to another area away from your boxes. House Sparrows have declined but still one male managed to kill a nest of 4 young bluebirds in one of my nest boxes. Renee Hallman also lost a nest with 4 young to a male House Sparrow. The bluebird society recommends removing all House Sparrows and humanely dispatching them. Trying to play hide and go seek with the sparrows doesn't work. What I mean is moving

your boxes away from sparrow areas does not work. You have to be pro active. When I started monitoring boxes at the Doon Valley Golf Club we had one section with 5 boxes all filled with House Sparrows. Over the year I removed all the sparrows from that section and the next year we had 3 Tree Swallow nests, 1 bluebird and 1 Chickadee. Weather still remains the number one factor affecting both reproductive success and overwintering success.

There should be lots of returning bluebirds next spring. Lets hope we don't get another ice storm like we did in April 2003.

Membership Renewal OEBS

The yearly membership is due on **December 31** of each



Wood Cover

year. We are leaving the annual due amount at \$10. The Annual General Meeting on March 18, 2023 will also be \$10 but will include coffee and donuts. [See our website oebbs.ca](http://www.oebbs.ca) for payment options.

David Dewey It is with sadness that I tell you bluebird member David Dewey passed away on April 1, 2022. He was a member of the society and very active in building bluebird nesting boxes in the Thorold/ St. Catherines/ Niagara area. His nest box partner Hans Vetter will continue monitoring the boxes that David and Hans have erected. A donation to the bluebird Society has been made by his sister Donna Plyey on his behalf.

Tree Swallow Double Nesting in One Nest Box

This past year in one of the orchards I monitor I had 2 Tree Swallow pairs nest in the same nest box. On May 8 there were no eggs, by the morning of May 14 there were 12 eggs. Each female laid one egg per day. I was able to catch both females and one of the males and band them. I put different colour nail polish on their tails so I could identify

when they went in the nest box. All hatched and fledged.

Next year we will have a camera set up ready to go if we suspect this is happening again. There are some questions that need to be answered. Did the two females incubate the eggs at the same time?

Or did they trade off with only 1 incubating each time. Could they identify which eggs were theirs. Did all 4 participate in the feeding of young? Several years ago Environment and Climate Change Canada had two nests with 11 eggs each in consecutive years at one of their Tree Swallow grids in Thunder Bay. Long Point had a similar nest with 11 young at one of their Tree Swallow grids in 2022. Hopefully if it happens again we will be able to answer these questions. Tree Swallows do not remove fecal sacs during the last 2- 3 days . A lot of fecal matter was left in this box always a sign that they were successful, when I find a box caked with fecal matter I know they have been successful. No build up of fecal matter usually indicates they fledged to early. If you disturb them late in the nesting there is a good chance they will fledge early. Bluebirds are the same.

When I check Tree Swallow fledged nests and there is a lot of fecal matter I record CWF.



At about 9 days
12 young

2 of the 12 young that fledged ½ day after the others. This nest box was caked with fecal matter.

Special flap trap I use to catch adults



12 Tree Swallow eggs, 2 of the 12 are underneath the others at the front.



Previous OEBS Conservation Award Recipients

1995 - George Coker

1996 - Leo Smith

1997 - Hazel bird

1998 - Don Wills

1999 - Sheldon Anderson and Doug Harrison.

2000 - Norm Shantz

2001 - Robert Burton

2002 - Halton Bluebird Club

2003-Herb Furniss and Don Park

2004 - Glanbrook Conservation Committee

2005 - Joe Hurst

2006 - Ottawa Duck Club

2007- Gerry Powers

2008 - Ken Reger

2009- Chris Lyons

2010 - Don Bissonnette

2011 - Henry Miller

2012 - Lucille Coleman

2013 - David Hampton

2014 - Josef Kral

2015 - Elwood Jones

2016 - Dan Welsh

2017 - Kurt Frei and Peter Rea

2018 - Mary Anne Rose and Karen Tufford Brehn

2019 - Dennis and Gwen Lewington

2020 - Elizabeth Kellogg

2021 - John and Janet Foster

Honorary Life Memberships

Anne Davidson has been awarded an Honorary Life Membership for her past service to the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society as our treasurer and membership secretary.

Tom Kott has been awarded an honorary life Membership for his past service to the Ontario Eastern bluebird Society.

Environmental Stewardship Awards

Brad Clements In recognition of his 40 plus years of nest record card contributions to the Ontario Nest Records Scheme.

The **Shisler Brothers Landscape Materials** In recognition of their many years of providing and protecting nesting habitat for Bank Swallows.

Awarded to the **Toyota Motor Manufacturing Company, Woodstock** In recognition of creating a 2 km walking trail that was naturalized with native plantings to attract birds and butterflies and for their ongoing collaboration with the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society in maintaining the over 70 nest boxes for Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds.

Certificate of Appreciation

Awarded to **Tom Kott** for his contribution to the oebs board from 2006 to 2021 and for nest box building skills that benefited cavity nesting birds, especially the Eastern Bluebird.



Bluebird's first molt

David Kinner



2021 Conservation Award Winners - John and Janet Foster

The 2021 OEBS conservation award was presented to John and Janet Foster. They have maintained a well managed bluebird trail since 1987. They are also original bluebird members. From 1987- 2021 they have fledged 392 bluebirds and 3,162 Tree Swallows.

Their best year for bluebirds was 2021 when they fledged 25 EABL. In 2011 they fledged 170 Tree Swallows.

How Many birds in the World ?

Researchers at the university of New South Wales used multiple data sources (including the Cornell Lab Of Ornithology's ebird data) to estimate the total number of birds worldwide. They calculated that the world's roughly 10,000 bird species accounted for roughly 50 billion individual birds- about 6 birds for each human. Only four species belonged to the billion bird club: species with an estimated global population of over a billion. Unfortunately, the House Sparrow is the first on the list (1.6 billion birds), with the European Starling (1.3 billion), Ring-billed Gull (1.2 billion), and Barn Swallow (1.1 Billion) rounding out the list. For comparison the conservation group partners in flight estimates the **Eastern Bluebird population at 23 million.**