



Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society

2024 Spring Newsletter ~ Editor Bill Read

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Welcome to the 2024 spring newsletter. **Our AGM will be held on Saturday March 9, 2024 at the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton at 170 Dundurn Street South in Hamilton.** It is a wonderful facility at a cost that we can afford. Something new this year, **lunch will be provided with the conference registration fee. Conference registration, lunch, coffee and donuts will cost \$20.** This will be charged to everyone. We have three speakers, Bob Bell will talk about his experience with lyme disease, Helen Toner on a Great Horned Owl study in Saskatchewan and Amy Chabot will discuss her work with Loggerhead Shrikes. The bucket raffle will be held at the end of the day. **Bring your bucket raffle items to the Registration Table.** Bluebird hats will be on sale at \$10 each. We have had a warm winter so far. January 2024 was 3 degrees above the long term average. We had one week of very cold weather starting on January 13. The rest of January was mild. February is starting out the same way, very mild and as of writing looks like it will be one of the warmest February's on record. This should produce very high Eastern Bluebird over wintering success. Expect to see lots of returning bluebirds in March and April.

Still a long way to go before bluebirds start nesting. Sometimes we pay for this mild weather with below normal temperatures in March, April and May. Remember the April ice storm of 2003. A blanket of 6-7 inches of ice covered the ground from April 1 to April 8 making it almost impossible for bluebirds to pick insects off the ground. By that time most of the edible berries had been eaten and the ones that were left were covered with ice. Don Wills found 12 dead bluebirds in his boxes near Carlisle after this weather event.

In 2007 during the early part of April we experienced 2 weeks of below normal temperatures that lasted to April 19th. This resulted in high Tree Swallow and bluebird mortality. On my trail (Bill Read) I found 15 dead adult Tree Swallows. (6 in one box). Don Wills found 4 dead adult bluebirds in his boxes near Caledonia and many dead Tree Swallows.

In New York as a result of this same weather event John Rogers found 14 dead adult bluebirds in his nest boxes. All were emaciated. He also found 227 dead adult Tree

Swallows on his trail at the Iroquois National Wildlife refuge. Barry Parker from Henderson New York reported finding 51 dead adult Tree Swallows in one box. He sent me the picture.

A cold weather event from 19-22 of June, 1992 caused 60-70 % Tree Swallow nestling mortality at the Mud Creek and Sewage Lagoon Tree Swallow grids near Long Point, Ontario. The Tree Swallow grid at the tip of Long Point suffered very little nestling mortality. Insect hatches were somewhat better there and it is a later developing site because of the lake effect. On my own trail near Cambridge (Bill Read) I recorded 189 dead Tree Swallow young during this weather event which represented 28.5% nestling mortality. 189/662=28.5% David Hussell said mortality of nestlings on this scale has not occurred previously in 15 years of study at Long Point. **Weather has always been the number one factor affecting over wintering and breeding success for both Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows.** Let's hope none of these weather events happen this year 2024.



Extreme weather events can also happen during migration, such an event happened in the Texas Kansas area in February 2021. The central population of Canada's Eastern Bluebirds (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Rainy River-Ontario) migrate to this area to spend the winter. A polar vortex set in at the beginning of February and lasted till around the 20th with some very cold temperatures. These below average temperatures extended well into the lower U. S with a lot of rain, snow and ice. On February the 16th all of the state of Texas was under a winter storm warning. Almost four million people in the state of Texas were without power. In Kansas with the wind chill, temperatures dropped to as low as -34° Celsius in some areas. Many adult bluebirds that over wintered in this area died during this polar vortex event. This was reflected in very low numbers of breeding bluebirds in Manitoba in 2021. Some areas saw an 80 % drop in returning pairs. The eastern population of Canada's Eastern Bluebirds were not affected by this weather event.

There have been other extreme weather events that have decimated bluebird populations across North America in the past. One in 1894-95 was particularly devastating. On January 26, 1895 a cold front from the

north west reached well into the southern United States. It brought with it rain, snow and high winds. Everything was ice bound or snow bound all the way to the gulf of Mexico. This was followed by weeks of unusual severity. By the end of the severe weather in April, it is said, that few bluebirds or robins could be found. Few bluebirds returned to their breeding grounds in the north and in many localities none were reported in the spring of 1895. It was five or ten years later before they seemed to reach normal numbers. (from **Bent page 253 - *Life Histories of North American Thrushes, Kinglets and their Allies***).

The State of Bluebirds in Ontario

Eastern Bluebirds are one grassland species that has increased in Ontario since a low population point in the late 1970s. The second breeding bird atlas showed a significant increase of occupied squares from the first atlas. The Eastern Bluebird population based on point counts from the second atlas is estimated at 44,000. Between 1981 and 2005, breeding bird survey data indicated an annual increase of 8% in Ontario. The third atlas should show a continued increase.

Were Eastern Bluebirds Common Prior to European Settlement in Ontario

The answer is probably no. Pre settlement Ontario below the Canadian Shield was covered mostly by a climax forest except for some prairie elements. Gowaty and Plissner suggest (1998) that burned areas in the boreal forest may have been ancestral habitat for bluebirds. I would agree somewhat with that assessment and today bluebirds also occupy clear cuts in the boreal forest. Bluebirds were found in these habitats during atlases in the Maritimes and Quebec (Erskine 1992; Cyr and Larivee 1995). The large numbers of bluebirds observed each year at Thunder Cape in the fall give weight to that assessment. In the fall of 2001, 740 Eastern Bluebirds were observed passing by Thunder Cape on their way to their winter migration destination in the Texas and Kansas area. These birds are migrating from breeding areas above Lake Superior. Bluebirds are sighted at the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory each year in both spring and fall.

Prior to European settlement there were open areas created by native peoples that Eastern Bluebirds could have occupied. Fire was used by the Neutrals and Huron to clear large swaths of land for farming crops like corn, beans and squash and to improve forest conditions for hunting. After a few years soil nutrients became depleted and new areas had to be cleared creating new habitat for bluebirds to occupy. Clearings in the forest were created

from the constant need for firewood to heat the long houses. This would have also created more habitat for bluebirds.

It is also possible that Eastern Bluebirds nested like other catharus thrushes within the boreal forest and then made a transition to more open habitat as the forests were cleared by settlers and suitable cavities became available. Some years ago Don Wills observed a bluebird pair that nested in Backus Woods in a small forest opening. They were successful at raising young to about 14 days until met with a severe cold spell. Chimney Swifts made that transition to Chimneys quite quickly and reached very high numbers in the early part of the twentieth century. Settlement and land clearing in began in the 1780's when 5000 American loyalists entered Ontario under a land grant scheme. Each grant required a degree of forest clearing before it became permanent. The forest was viewed by early settlers as nothing more than an obstacle to settlement. Initial cutting by the French and English focused on giant oaks for masts, spars and hulls. After the war of 1812 settlers began arriving in greater numbers. The systematic clearing of land for timber extraction did not occur until the nineteenth century. Most of Southern Ontario was clear cut in the mid to 1800s and early 1900s to provide land for crops and homesteads. This created optimum nesting habitat for bluebirds. Fence rows of tree trunks, cedar rail fences and wooden posts gave the Eastern Bluebirds plenty of viable nest cavities. The bluebird became abundant during this period and up to the beginning of the early 20th century. Factors that led to this increase – no House Sparrows or Starlings to usurp nest cavities. Both were later introduced, the House Sparrow in 1850 and the European Starling in 1890. Raccoons, a frequent nest box predator were valued for their fur and were strictly controlled by hunting. Present evaluations of bluebird declines in the 20th century were based on these artificially inflated bluebird numbers during this period. Bluebird numbers began to decline from these highs starting in the beginning of the 1900s. House Sparrows peaked around 1910 taking cavities away from bluebirds in urban and rural areas, starlings did the same, their numbers peaked in the early 1950s. Interestingly Red headed Woodpeckers were also common at the same time European Starling populations peaked. In 1954 James Baillie from the ROM put the starling population in Hamilton at 2 million. Many older members will remember the shotgun shoots in cities across central Ontario. One shoot in Hamilton in 1954 had 122 gunners with shotguns shooting the starlings out of the white elms that lined Gore park in downtown Hamilton. They shot on average 5000 starlings each shoot that did little good as other starlings soon moved in to fill the void. Changing farming practices, steel fences replaced wooden posts and mixed farming was replaced with monoculture, mostly

corn, beans wheat and barley. Tighter controls on grain storage and a decline in horses and thus less manure with seeds led to a decline in House Sparrow populations. Beginning in the fifties Eastern Bluebird weather related population declines were not followed by rebounds to pre-weather related numbers. Bluebird declines continued and reached a low point in the late 1970's after a number of particularly cold winters. There was concern that the Eastern Bluebird may become an extirpated species in Southern Ontario. In 1981 Chris Risley was commissioned by the Ministry of Natural Resources to write a status report on the Eastern Bluebird. Based on his report the Committee on the Status of Endangered wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) awarded the Eastern Bluebird a status of rare in Canada in 1981. The first Breeding Bird Atlas and a nest box survey done by Read showed that bluebirds were more common than previously known. Based on Read's 1987 nest box report the Ontario Eastern Bluebird society was formed in 1988. The North American Bluebird Society was formed in 1978. Both organizations promoted the use of predator proof nest boxes as a way to increase the bluebird population. This and warmer weather as a result of climate change has resulted in an increase in the bluebird population in Canada. Based on a Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) report by Read and Alvo in 1996 it was assigned a status of Not At Risk. At present the Eastern Bluebird population in Ontario is stable with each year seeing more bluebirds overwinter. Prominent Hamilton birder George North who died in 1983 never saw a winter bluebird.

Canadian Atlas of Bird Banding Volume 1 Doves, Cuckoos, and Hummingbirds through Passerines. 1921-1995. Environment Canada. Canadian Wildlife Service.

Gowaty, P.A., and J.H. Plissner 1998. Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). In the Birds of North America, No 381 (A. Poole and F. Gill, Eds). The Birds of North America. INC. Philadelphia.

William F. Read Tree Swallow re-trap data unpublished work.

Erskine, A. J. 1992 Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Maritimes Provinces. Nimbus Publishing and Nova Scotia Museum. (Chelsea Green) Halifax.

Cyr. A. and J. Larivee. 1995 Atlas sasion -nier des oiseaux du Quebec, Les Presses de L'Universite de Sherbrooke et Societe de Losir Ornithologique de L'Estrie, Sherbrooke, PQ.

Special thanks to John Woodcock and Rinchen Boardman for providing both spring and fall Eastern Bluebird migration numbers recorded at the Thunder Cape

Bird Observatory at the tip of Sleeping Giant Provincial Park.

Do Nest Box Grids Help Cavity Nesting Birds Like the Tree Swallow

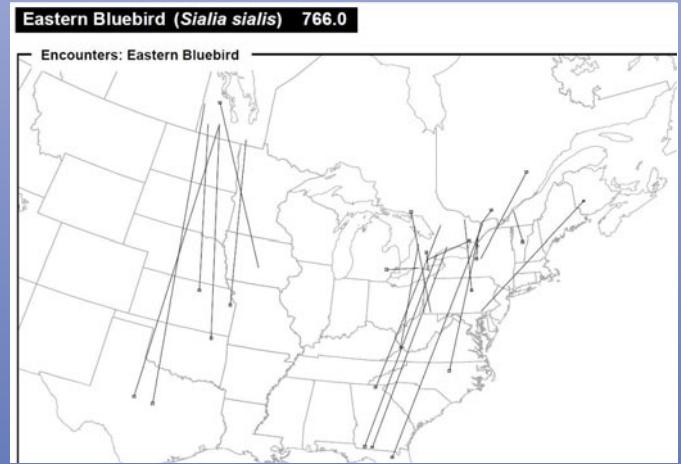
The answer. Only if well managed with complete predator protection. Without this protection nest box grids can very easily slip into a sink population. A sink population does not produce enough young to maintain it at the same level without immigration from other source populations. ***Banding at nest boxes*** The North American Banding council has developed a protocol for banding at nest boxes. All boxes must be predator proof before banding. If you have a banding license you have to abide by these rules in order to maintain your permit. I know of several trails where the number of birds each year declines because of inadequate monitoring and lack of proper predator protection. In short these required protocols are not being followed while banding. To high a density of nest boxes can also lead to lower fledged young totals especially if there are not enough insects available to feed all the nestlings. If fledged young totals are lower and there is a higher proportion of dead young it maybe time to reduce the number of boxes. Tree Swallows don't recognize the difference between fledging 1 young or 5 thus they look at this as being successful and return the following year. Once you have set up a trail there is in my opinion a moral obligation to maintain it properly. If you can't do that then take the boxes down. Animal care committees need to look at what should be done when a group of nest boxes is no longer needed for scientific study and falls into disrepair. You have used these birds for your study-now what. Should it be left to deteriorate, all boxes removed or some provision made to continue monitoring. Unmonitored nest boxes have very poor reproductive success. The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society recommends removing all the boxes once monitoring stops. This also applies to single use boxes that are spaced out. One and done nest box building workshops where everyone gets to build a nest box very seldom become a positive for the intended occupant without proper guidance as to where to put it up. The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society will not endorse any workshop that lacks that component. To that end the bluebird society has produced a protocol that deals with all aspects of being successful. This protocol can be found on our website oeb.ca Three of those components are box location, predator protection and monitoring.

Migration Routes and Breeding Distribution in Canada

The Canadian Atlas of Bird Banding clearly shows the migration destinations of the Eastern Bluebird in Canada. The central population residing in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Rainy River and above the western end of lake superior migrate to areas around Texas, Kansas and Oklahoma. Four birds banded as nestlings in Manitoba wintered in Texas and Kansas. The eastern population that makes up possibly 80% of Canada's Eastern Bluebirds migrate to the central regions of the eastern U.S to the Gulf coast. (see Banding Atlas Map) Four winter encounters of Ontario birds occurred in Kentucky, North Carolina and Georgia. Encounters of Ontario birds in Georgia and Florida in March also indicate a southern U S wintering distribution for these birds. Due to climate change bluebirds are not wintering as far south as before. Each year more and more bluebirds overwinter in Ontario and continue to push northward during their winter stay. Close to 1000 Eastern Bluebirds are recorded on Christmas bird counts each year in Ontario. Legendary Hamilton birder George North did not see a winter bluebird in the Hamilton count area during his lifetime. How things have changed. The inaugural Flamborough Christmas Bird Count in 2021 had a remarkable 76 bluebirds recorded. This count is north of the Hamilton circle. The Eastern Bluebird breeds in all areas of Ontario except the Hudson's Bay lowlands. Recent range maps and migration information by the North American Bluebird Society and the Cornell lab of Ornithology have information that is not up to date. This is hard to understand with all the breeding and migration data that is available today. The North American Bluebird Society deals with only 3 species and needs to use the available information to be current.

Eastern Bluebird Breeding Distribution In Canada

The provincial breeding bird atlases clearly show where Eastern bluebirds breed in Canada. Cornell and the North American Bluebird Society seem unable to use this data from the breeding bird atlases to accurately draw a range map, very puzzling, especially for the North American Bluebird Society that only deal with three species. The Thunder Cape bird observatory located at the tip of sleeping giant national park at the western end of Lake Superior each year record Eastern Bluebirds migrating past their station. A record number of 740 bluebirds were reported in the fall of 2001. Where are these bluebirds coming from? They are coming from areas above Lake superior where they nest in clear cuts, forest burn areas and human habitations. There would seem to be a spot somewhere along the northern Lake superior shoreline



Canadian Atlas of Bird Banding. Volume 1: Doves, Cuckoos and Hummingbirds through Passerines. 1921-1995. Environment Canada. Canadian Wildlife Service.

where bluebirds either go west or east along the shoreline. Those that go west would end up going through Minnesota on their way to an area centered around Texas, Kansas and Oklahoma. Most would continue along the northern Lake Superior shoreline but some would head to the tip of Sleeping Giant Provincial Park where they would either turn around and go back to continue their migration or fly across to Pie Island and then through Minnesota. This happens at the Old Cut bird banding station in Ontario where birds are observed flying out to the tip of Long point and later turning around and coming back to continue west along the Lake Erie shoreline. We need to do some work to determine the point where they either go east or west along the northern Lake Superior shoreline possibly using motus or some other tracking device.

How Long Does a Bluebird Live?

The answer not very long. I have banded over 10,000 eastern bluebirds . Both young and adults were banded. Only 3 of 1800 previously banded bluebirds were 7 years old. The average age of those 1800 was just a little over 2 years. These are birds that were previously banded and have survived and returned to breed. Those at 6 years under 10 individuals. I often hear reports form bluebirders of the same pair returning year after year. Because bluebirds look the same it is hard to tell if they are the same pair. It is more likely 2 or 3 pairs. Bluebirds differ greatly in their breeding behaviour. At some nest boxes both adults will completely disappear and wait till I am gone. At other boxes I will be immediately attacked by both male and female, usually only the male. On occasion the male has hit me on the head. Defensive vocalizations start as soon as they see me. Sometimes you can tell by their



Participants and staff with their completed nest boxes in front of the Bronte Creek Provincial Park building.



Our OEBS bluebird team From Left to right : Karen Tufford Brehn, Mary Anne Rose, Mr. Mouriopolous, Chris Mouriopolous



Sheila Wiebe, Bronte Creek Education Specialist on the left, and Sylvia Van Walsum, past president of the Halton Bluebird Club and longtime OEBS birdathon representative.

Special thanks to the staff at Bronte Creek, for Chris Mouriopolous and his father for putting together the nest box kits, for Mary Anne doing the nest box protocol presentation and Karen who assisted with the box building.

behaviour if it is the same pair returning from the previous year. Maybe you have a meal worm feeder that they immediately go too, or they perch in a regular spot. They may not view you as a threat or that aggressive behaviour mentioned above may help in deciding if it is the same pair.

Tree Swallows have a lifespan that is almost twice that of a bluebird. In 2015 I analyzed the Tree Swallow re-trap data from the three nest box grids at the Tip, Sewage Lagoons and Mud Creek. Each of those grids contained 1 nine year old Tree Swallow. Averages of all re-trapped Tree Swallow adults at each grid in years were -Mud Creek 3.68, Sewage Lagoons 3.7 and the Tip 3.8.

Bronte Creek Nest Box Building Workshop

On February 10, 2024, Bronte Creek Provincial Park, The Halton Bluebird Club and the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society conducted a nest box building workshop for youth. It was a great success. Lunch and a presentation on bluebirding by the OEBS was provided. Each group got to take home a bluebird box with specific instructions on how and where to put it up. Lunch was provided for the participants. We are looking forward to running another workshop next year.



I can see a future in wildlife Biology for these participants.

Thanks to all the organizers and participants

Nest Box Reports 2023

The metrological winter (December, January and February) 2022-2023 was the third warmest on record. `March 2023 has been average. This was followed by a very warm and wet April. The overall April temperature was 2 degrees higher than the average. This was followed by a very dry May with average temperatures. The May night time lows were 1.5 degrees below normal. Some mortality of nestlings that were not fully feathered and not brooded were reported during the cold nights that we experienced during this period. Placing hand warmers under the nest during these cold nights has helped keep the nestlings alive. I suggest you might try this if we are in this same position in May 2024. Overall it was a very successful nesting season for both bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

Henry Miller reports that he did not see a Tree Swallow in 2023 until the last week in April. He estimates that nesting began almost 2 weeks later than normal. He didn't see any bluebirds until May but others reported seeing them earlier. Henry monitors 92 nest boxes in Rainy River District west of Thunder Bay. Henry reports that 6 pairs of bluebirds produced 28 fledged young and 36 pairs of Tree Swallows fledged 151 young. There were 8 House Wren nests, five of which built nests over the Tree Swallow nests. So overall not a bad year after a slow start.

Herb Furniss and **Debbie Hewitt** monitored 90 nest boxes in Victoria (City of Kawartha Lakes), know as

the Carden Plain. A total of 186 bluebirds fledged from 230 eggs. This is a 81% egg to fledge rate. Herb uses a coker box design painted white. Also fledged were 12 Tree Swallows from 2 nests. House Sparrows are not found in this area. Forty three Pairs of bluebirds with 186 fledged young is a fledged young per pair rate of 4.33. Over the life of this trail Herb has fledged 4,647 bluebirds, impressive indeed. Herb received the bluebird conservation award in 2003. House Wrens and weather were both ranked no 1 as the presumed cause of any nest failure.

John and Janet foster

Their trail fledged 11 bluebirds and 64 Tree Swallows in 2023. This is far from the average number. A total of 13 nest boxes were either destroyed or badly damaged by Black Bears. Sixty-nine chicks/ eggs lost to bear, wrens, and 2 old boxes that fell. They comment that insects are not nearly so numerous this year. They did have one Luna Moth, the first in 15-20 years.

Queens University Biological Station had a total of 199 nest boxes occupied (168 by Tree Swallows and 31 by bluebirds). Tree Swallows had a hatch rate of 5.13 per nest and a fledge rate of 3.17 per nest. Eastern Bluebirds had a hatch rate of 3.25 per nest and a fledge rate of 2.09 per nest. I have been sent the results from the Queens Biological Station for many years. I am always puzzled at the very low fledge rate for Tree Swallows (3.17 per nest). How is this colony sustainable without immigration from

other source colonies. I do not know of any other grids that have these low numbers. LPBO grids as an example of high productivity. Possibly the number of nest boxes needs to be reduced. Is predation a problem? I know in the past the Grey Rat Snake was an issue. Bluebirds are a little better but not where I expect they should be. For bluebirds I would expect at least a 70% egg to fledge rate and for Tree Swallows around 80-85% egg to fledge rate.

Gerard S. Powers monitors 162 nest boxes in Grey County. He had a good year with 239 bluebirds fledged from 254 eggs. This is an egg to fledge percentage of 94%. Forty three pairs were represented. Boxes are checked bi-weekly. Nest boxes are on metal posts and greased to stop climbing predators. A total of 396 Tree Swallows fledged from 64 nests. Bluebird numbers are down slightly from 2022. Jerry said there were lots of insects. He didn't do any feeding this year. Tree Swallows were also down this year. No Tree Swallow nests were lost this year. Overall a good year.

I have mentioned many times that I use automobile grease placed in the middle of the t-bar or metal pole. This stops raccoons not because they cant climb the t-bar or pole, it is because they don't want to get grease on their hands so they leave it alone. Almost 100% effective.

Nature Barrie now owns 100 boxes and monitors 128 nest boxes., broken down into 7 strings, broken down yet again into 11 monitored runs. Out of these 128 boxes they had 29 bluebird nests, 67 Tree Swallow, 33 House Wren and 2 Black Capped Chickadee nests. They fledged 97 Eastern Bluebirds from 127 eggs for an egg to fledge percentage of 76 %. A total of 207 Tree Swallows fledged from an egg total of 291 which is a 71 % egg to fledge percentage. Ninety-five House Wrens fledged from 108 eggs and 0 black Capped Chickadees from 5 eggs. One box had 3 Red Squirrels. House Wren numbers have increased significantly and this has affected the Tree Swallow success rate. Overall a very good year from a lot of hard work.

Your editor **Bill Read** was able to fledge 413 Eastern Bluebirds which includes 9 from the Doon Valley Golf Course. A total of 68 pairs were represented which is a fledged per pair rate of 6.07. Also fledged were 678 Tree Swallows (222 from the Doon Golf course and 456 from my boxes). A total of 47 previously banded adult Eastern Bluebirds were re-trapped and 46 new bluebird adults were banded. A total of 417 bluebirds were banded in 2023 which includes both young and adults. The average age of those re-trapped adult bluebirds was 100/47 – 2.13 years. On June 11 Sam Lewis and Eila O'Neil helped band 170 Tree Swallow nestlings at the Doon Valley Golf course.

Another good year for **Dan Baarda** with 65 bluebirds fledged from the 73 nest boxes he monitors in Lincoln County. This is Dan's 25th year of monitoring his bluebird trail. Nineteen pairs were represented which is a fledged young per pair of 65/19- 3.42. Dan uses a Gilbertson type nest box which is painted white. Inverted large coffee cans are used to deter climbing predators. Other nests include 26 pairs of Tree Swallows that fledged 89 young. Weather, House Wrens and House Sparrows were listed as the possible causes if young or eggs were lost. All House Sparrows are trapped and removed. Another good year.

Tubex Tree Shelters

A report in the last NABS Bluebird magazine (Tree Tube Hazards Page 6, Bluebird Winter 2024 VOL 46 NO.1) of three Eastern Bluebirds found at the bottom of Tubex Tree Shelters, 2 were dead and one alive and released. Bluebirds investigate these openings as possible nest cavities and because the inside is smooth they can't get out. This happened in Michigan to a home owner who used the tubex shelters while planting several native trees and shrubs. They were not equipped with mesh caps. This was from a small number of shelters and it trapped 3 bluebirds. There are tens of thousands of these tree shelters across North America.

Almost thirty years ago I contacted the distributor in England to alert them to this hazard. They assured me that they would provide mesh nets to fit over the top of the shelter to prevent birds from getting trapped in them. I just looked on the internet and found two manufacturers, Tubex Standard and Tubex Tree Shelters (Forestry Products). Tubex Tree Shelters had the mesh guards with a picture on their home page, Tubex Standard did as well in one picture. I am not sure if the mesh nets come with an order or they have to be ordered separately. It is probably time to re-investigate this hazard to bluebirds. **Next time you see these tubes have a look to see if any birds are trapped at the bottom of the tube and let me know of your findings.**

Mining claim markers have killed thousands of cavity nesting birds, have a look at the following article. Also in that newsletter -The Miracle of Sammy.

See page-8 -2014 Fall OEBS newsletter. Article -PVC Mining Claim Marker Pipes Kill Millions of Cavity Nesting Birds.

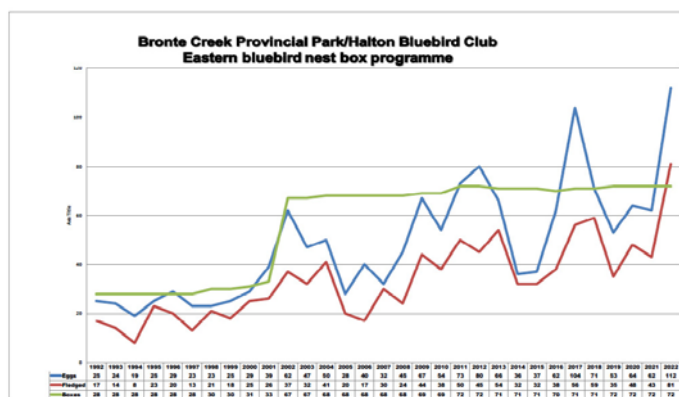
Re: The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society (OEBS) and Halton Blue Bird Club

2023 NABS AWARDS PROGRAM RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

The North American Bluebird Society's Awards Committee and its Board of Directors were pleased at the increased interest expressed in the Awards program for 2023. We received some very deserving nominations, as you are about to see. Please be thinking of those involved in your state and local bluebird organizations whose actions could qualify for consideration for a NABS Award. Have their contributions distinguished them in the areas of fieldwork, education/training, methodology, research, etc.? If so, please consider nominating them for one of our award categories in 2024.

Our 2023 Award Recipients:

The **Bluebird Conservation Award** is presented to individuals, groups or organizations that have implemented a new program or method of successfully presenting artificial nesting opportunities to native cavity-nesting species. Such efforts can be practical (i.e., development of new field techniques), theoretical, and/or educational. This year's Bluebird Conservation Award recipients are **the Halton Bluebird Club of Ontario, Canada** and **the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW)**.



The Halton Bluebird Club was founded in 1989 and has been in existence for over 35 years. The club established a bluebird trail at Bronte Provincial Park in Oakville, near Toronto, Canada, that successfully fledges both bluebirds and Tree Swallows each nesting season. They have been tracking fledging success since 1992 (see chart). Additionally, the club has an active banding program, banding close to 550 bluebirds and 200 Tree swallows.

The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin's

(BRAW) nomination, submitted by Association Secretary Gene Kroupa, was impressive. BRAW has been a NABS Affiliate for 37 years and its members monitor and report data from over 7,000 nestboxes statewide. The organization has funded significant research efforts with Dr. Memuna Khan and her students at Ripon College. BRAW serves both members and non-members and keeps communication flowing with the publication of their quarterly newsletter, Wisconsin Bluebird. They have revived their awards program and have nearly doubled their membership since 2019 by developing a strategic plan that involves updating by-laws and the organization's mission statement in addition to re-engaging lost members and attracting new ones through active engagement and promotions. The group has offered to share their strategic and marketing plans with other affiliates looking to grow their memberships.

Awards for **Bluebird Research** are given to individuals or groups who accomplish significant laboratory or field research that advances the scientific database on bluebirds or other native cavity-nesting species and/or for the preparation and presentation of scientific articles and publications that advance public knowledge of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting species.

The 2023 **Bluebird Research Award** recipients are the **Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW)** and the **Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society**. The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin has a long tradition of supporting and conducting field research that provides results in improving nestbox design and bluebird production. Thanks to its citizen scientist members, cooperative efforts with Ripon College and financial support from the Carol McDaniel Legacy Fund, their research continues. This award focuses on their 2-year Wren Guard Study, completed in 2022, the results of which can be found on BRAW's website, www.braw.org and viewed on Ripon College's website, www.ripon.edu/category/research. An article about the study, "Wren Guards Work in Wisconsin Study" was featured in NABS Bluebird Journal, Winter 2022-2023, pg. 24.

The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society, established in 1988, has hosted 2 NABS Conferences (1996 and 2010) and their Bluebird Research nomination focuses on a scientific paper entitled, "Bluebirds Experience Impaired Hatching Success in Conventionally Sprayed Apple Orchard Habitats: A 31-year Study." Authors of the paper are William F. Read, Simon G. English, Christina G. Hick and Christine A. Bishop. The results of this study are interesting indeed, and the research paper may be read here: www.setac.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/etc.5218