

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society 1992 Spring Newsletter

165 Green Valley Drive, Unit 2, Kitchener, Ontario N2P 1K3

The OEBS Annual general meeting has been set for April 4, 1992 at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington.

It's hard to believe another nesting season is just around the corner. The first part of the winter was unseasonably mild until we were hit with a major snow storm around the middle of January. I have received numerous reports of Eastern Bluebirds overwintering in the Niagara area and along the north shore of Lake Erie through the County of Haldimand Norfolk all the way down to Port Stanley. Joe Hurst, who maintains a very successful trail in and around Port Stanley, reported a flock of 22 EABL's overwintering in that area. EABL's are remarkably hardy and unless major ice storms occur, most overwinter successfully. These reports also tell us that there are a lot more Bluebirds in Ontario than there were in the early 1980's.

Member Presentations at the Annual General Meeting April 4, 1992

Part of the morning is being reserved for short OEBS member presentations. If you would like to give a short 10-15 slide presentation or talk about your Bluebird trail, please fill out the enclosed form and send it to me by March 31, 1992. (This talk could involve any aspect of Bluebirding i.e. Nestbox design, record keeping, predator protection, nestbox mounts, etc.) I want to keep the presentations short so that there will be plenty of time for questioning. If you would like to talk it over with me, call me at 1-(519)-748-4853.

This year at the Annual General Meeting we will focus on other cavity nesters and topics that also relate to Bluebirds. This year's conference will feature a presentation on Lyme disease by Professor Gord Surgeoner of the University of Guelph. Some concerns have been raised about the possibility of contracting this disease by handling birds and cleaning out the used nests from nestboxes. Should Bluebirders wear a protective mask when cleaning out old nests, etc.? Dr. Surgeoner will answer these and any other questions you might have with his extremely interesting and informative talk.

Mike Furber of Lynndock Ontario will discuss his work with nestboxes that he sets up for screech owls. Mike is an elementary school teacher from Haldimand-Norfolk county and has been working with owls and other cavity nesting birds for the last twenty years. We look forward to this informative presentation. Your editor, William F. Read, will also give a presentation on a study that is examining the effects of pesticides on EABL's and tree swallows that nest in apple orchards in Southern Ontario.

1991 Nestbox Survey

I have enclosed the results from the 1990 Nestbox Survey. The number of respondents is down somewhat from 1989 when 176 survey forms were returned. (See analysis of results.)

I am still receiving the 1991 nestbox survey forms and will send the results out with the 1992 Fall Newsletter. I have included a 1992 Nestbox Survey form with this newsletter so that you can compile your results at the end of the 1992 nesting season and send them directly to me instead of waiting until the Fall Newsletter arrives with the 1992 survey form. The survey has been compiled over the last five years 1987-1991 and remains the major objective of the OEBS. This information is compiled on a large chart from the individual survey forms. (I will bring a copy of the chart for everyone to see at the Annual General Meeting on April 4, 1992.)

Survey Year	No. of Nestbox Reports	EABL Fledged Young (Ontario) only
1987	97	4,950
1988	156	6,352
1989	176	8,260
1990	148	7,307
1991	In process of being compiled	

We need completed surveys in order to monitor Eastern Bluebird population trends in Ontario on a long term basis. If you know someone who has an EABL trail, please give them a Nestbox Survey form or send their address to me so I can mail them one.

Nestbox County Co-ordinators

On the bottom of each blue membership application, we have asked if you would like to be a county co-ordinator. In order to increase our return rate of completed Nestbox Surveys, we are asking for volunteer county co-ordinators. Responsibilities would include:

1. Locating as many nestbox trails (1 or more boxes) as possible in your county and making sure they report to the OEBS annual nestbox survey.
2. To compile the names, addresses and phone numbers of individuals who have nestbox trails and send them to the OEBS.
3. To promote EABL conservation within the county.

We hope eventually to have an OEBS member who would act as a co-ordinator for all the counties. If you are interested, please contact the OEBS.

How to go about this...

1. Talk to other trail operators in your county and ask if they know of any other trails.
2. Make inquiries at naturalist's clubs, OFAH local clubs (Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters), conservation authorities, Ministry of Natural Resources offices, etc.
3. Contact your local newspaper and ask if they will run a story about EABL's and the OEBS. Any previous OEBS newsletter articles can be reprinted by the newspaper as long as credit is given. Most newspapers, especially small local weeklies, will be more than happy to do this at no cost as a public service announcement. This is an excellent way to find out about other EABL trails and Bluebirders in your county. Mark Denomme, who has a cottage on Manitoulin Island, placed an article in the local newspaper. Six bluebird trail operators, previously unreported, wrote back to Mark reporting their nextbox trails and inquiring about the OEBS. Information has been sent to these individuals along with a copy of the Fall '91 Newsletter and the 1991 Nestbox Survey forms. Thanks again, Mark Denomme.

Norah Lane Award

This commemorative plaque will be given out at each annual conference to an individual or group who have made a significant contribution to Eastern Bluebird conservation in the previous year within the province of Ontario.

Norah's late husband, John Lane, was one of the pioneers of Bluebird conservation in the prairie provinces. Norah has continued with her husband's passion for bluebirds and conservation. The OEBS greatly appreciates her contribution and support. Norah now resides in Toronto. The recipient of each year's award will be a decision of the newly formed board of directors and will be announced at each Annual General Meeting. (Any member can nominate a group or individual for this award.)

Lyme Disease

Some concern has been raised by bluebirders about the possible transmission of Lyme disease through handling birds. I spoke with Dr. Ian Barker about this possibility. According to Dr. Barker, the chances of this happening are extremely slim. Dr. Gordon Surgeoner of the University of Guelph will be addressing this concern at the 1992 Annual General Meeting. The following article is reprinted from the Memorandum to banders, Number 49, C.W.S. Dec 1989. This article was included in the OEBS March 1990 newsletter and is reprinted again. It will give readers some background information for Dr. Surgeoner's talk on April 4, 1992.

"Michael Biro, from Toronto, wrote us expressing concern about bird-transmitted ticks. He was concerned that field biologists were a high-risk group, and that someone should gather information on the incidence of these ticks. We contacted Dr. Ian Barker at Guelph University and found out the following. Lyme disease is still rare in Canada (less than 10 cases). The ticks that carry Lyme disease are present in the deer at Long Point in southern Ontario but are not present in the mammals on the base of the Point. The two other ticks that could transmit Lyme disease are not common in Ontario but one is fairly common in western Canada. Several horses in southern British Columbia have been diagnosed with Lyme disease based on antibody counts and clinical signs.

The symptoms of Lyme disease are variable, but 70% of the time a red rash expands from the site of the bite, leaving a white central area. Symptoms include fatigue and headache. After 3-6 months chronic arthritic-type symptoms may develop. These can be treated with a fairly long session of drug therapy. The sooner Lyme disease is diagnosed the less chance there is of permanent joint damage. In Ontario and Manitoba the public health service labs can diagnose Lyme disease with a blood sample.

The tick commonly known to carry Lyme disease has been reported in 30 species of birds. A tick which is embedded and engorged in a bird's skin will not let go to attach to a person handling it, but an unattached tick among a bird's feathers could move onto a person holding the bird. The chances of this happening are slim.

There are two scientists who can identify ticks found on birds. Just drop the tick in 70% alcohol, note the time and date, locality and species of the host bird and send to either:

- (1) Dr. Gordon Surgeoner, Department of Environmental Biology,
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 2W1
- (2) Dr. Everet Lindquist
Biosystematics Research Institute, Agriculture Canada,
K.V. Neatby Building, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0C6"

Back Issues of OEBS

Back issues of OEBS Newsletters and annual nestbox reports are available from 1987. Each newsletter or annual nestbox report is 25¢ plus 50¢ mailing cost per item. Contact Bill Read, 165 Green Valley Drive, Unit 2, Kitchener, Ontario N2P 1K3 with your requests.

North American Bluebird Society Annual General Conference

The fourteenth annual meeting of the North American Bluebird Society was held October 11-13, 1991 at the Bermuda Biological Station for Research, Inc, Ferry reach, Bermuda. The Bermuda Bluebird Society was the host. Approximately 75 people attended from many states and provinces. An outline of the conference proceedings can be found in the most recent issue of Sialia, Volume 14, Number 1 Winter 1992.

At the conference, Leo Smith of Brantford, Ontario received an award for Bluebird conservation for his exhaustive efforts and innovative techniques. Leo has been a bluebirder for about 30 years and maintains a trail of 512 boxes in an area near Orangeville. Leo uses 8 foot cedar posts which are soaked in creosote and wrapped with metal to discourage predators. All Leo's boxes are completely predator proof. Congratulations Leo for your efforts on behalf of the Eastern Bluebird!

OEBS Executive

Doreen Stahle has retired from her position as membership secretary, Annual General Meeting organizer, etc., etc. Thanks again, Doreen, for all your help in the past. The OEBS could not have done without you.

Darlene and Rick Ryan have taken over the position of membership secretary and treasurer. Gloria Zimmerman has joined the OEBS as corresponding secretary. "Welcome Darlene, Rick and Gloria to the OEBS executive!"

North American Bluebird Society

I would recommend for all nestbox operators to become members of NABS (address below). Their Tenth Anniversary Edition 1988, has compiled some of the best articles written about Bluebirds over a ten-year period. I would recommend it highly, as I would recommend a subscription to the NABS.

North American Bluebird Society, Box 6295, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. 20906-0295
Membership - Regular: \$15.00 U.S.

Ballie Birdathon

Sylvia Van Walsum will again be our official representative in the Ballie Birdathon. Sylvia raised \$124.46 for OEBS in 1991. Sylvia will be collecting pledges at the Annual General Meeting on April 4th but if you would like to send your pledge to her, mail to:

Sylvia Van Walsum, 343 Ashdale Place, Oakville, Ontario L6J 4B1

Board of Directors

As was stated in the last newsletter, we are forming a Board of Directors so that we can be a more effective organization.

Founder and Newsletter Editor:	William F. Read
Treasurer and Membership Secretary:	Darlene and Rick Ryan
Corresponding Secretary:	Gloria Zimmerman

Volunteers needed for the following positions:

Archivist: Someone who resides near the Kitchener-Waterloo region. Duties would include sorting past newsletters, correspondence, various Bluebird material and making an inventory list.

Recording Secretary: Needed to record minutes of OEBS meetings including the Annual General Meeting.

Directors at large: Three people needed (in addition to existing Director, Doreen Stahle) one of whom would be responsible for co-ordinating all of the nestbox county co-ordinators.

Contact William F. Read if interested.

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**Annual General Meeting April 4, 1992
Member Presentations 10-15 Minutes**

Name: _____

Address: _____
Street City Province Postal Code

Phone #: _____

Description of Presentation: _____

(A slide projector will be available for presentations)

Please mail to William F. Read, 165 Green Valley Dr., Kitchener N2P 1K3 by March 31, 1992.

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, April 4, 1992

Lecture Room

Royal Botanical Gardens Headquarters

Burlington

- 08:45 - 09:30 Registration (\$4.00 members, \$5.00 non-members)
Viewing of Bucket Raffle Prizes and Display Table
- 09:30 - 09:45 Introduction and Business MeetingBill Read
- 09:45 - 10:30 Talk on Cavity Nesting Species (TBA)
- 10:30 - 10:45 Coffee Break
- 10:45 - 12:00 Member Presentations
- 12:00 - 01:30 Lunch and Tour of Mediterranean Room RBG
- 01:30 - 02:15 Nestboxes for Other Cavity NestersMike Furber
(Discussion of work with Screech Owls in Nestboxes)
- 02:15 - 02:30 Coffee Break
- 02:30 - 02:45 Bucket Raffle Draw
- 02:50 - 03:50 Lyme Disease: Distribution in Ontario Dr. Gordon Surgeoner
(Concerns *Bluebirders* may have in relation to
cleaning out nestboxes and handling birds will be addressed.)

Meeting to be followed by Chinese food dinner at Lee's Gardens (if sufficient interest)

Bring along your nestboxes, predator traps, record keeping sheets, etc. for the display table.

Please return by March 31, 1992 to:

William F. Read,
165 Green Valley Drive #2,
Kitchener, Ontario N2P 1K2

YES, we're coming to the conference.

Name(s) _____ Telephone: () _____

Address _____
Street City Province Postal Code

Pre-Registration Fee: \$4.00

I would be interested in joining other '*Bluebirders*' for a Chinese Food dinner at Lee's Gardens after the meeting: Yes No

Directions to Site of April 4, 1992 OEBS Conference

Royal Botanical Gardens Headquarters, 680 Plains Road, Burlington, Ontario

From Toronto:

Take the QEW west to Burlington, then continue on Highway 403 west towards Hamilton. Take the Highway 6 north exit. At the first traffic lights, turn right onto Plains Road. At the next lights turn left (this is still Plains Road). The Royal Botanical Gardens Centre is about 1 km down on the right at Botanical Dr. Parking is available behind the building.

From North or West of Hamilton:

Take Highway 401 to Highway 6 south to Hamilton. Stay on Highway 6 past the intersection with Highway 5. Continue down a long hill (this is the Niagara Escarpment) until you come to a set of traffic lights (about 2 km past Highway 5). Turn left and travel about 0.5 km to another set of traffic lights (Plains Road). Turn left here. The Royal Botanical Gardens Centre is about 1 km along Plains Road on your right at Botanical Dr. Parking is available behind the building.

From South or West of Hamilton:

Take Highway 403 east through Hamilton, then take the exit to Highway 6 north. About 0.3 km past the exit ramp there is a set of traffic lights. Turn right here. Go about 0.5 km to another set of traffic lights (Plains Road) and turn left here. The Royal Botanical Gardens Centre is about 1 km along Plains Road on your right at Botanical Dr. Parking is available behind the building.

ONTARIO EASTERN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY NESTBOX SURVEY - 1990

William Read

Since 1987, the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society has conducted a survey of the results from nestbox trails operated throughout Ontario. Continued monitoring of the results reported on survey forms returned by nestbox operators can provide a good indicator of changes or trends in EABL populations.

Only 148 reports were received in 1990 compared to 176 in 1989. The data reported were incorporated directly into the attached summary tables which are arranged on a county basis. Because not every form was complete, it was necessary to make some estimates for the missing data based on the information that was supplied. For example, if a respondent indicated six successful nestings, but made no estimate of total fledged young, an estimate of (4 x 6) or 24 fledged young was used. On the otherhand, no estimates were made for egg totals. This is why the egg total reported is lower than the EABL fledged total. The egg total would probably be around 11,000 if all trail operators had counted and recorded on their survey sheets, the eggs laid.

Cold wet weather during the early part of the 1990 nesting season resulted in high nestling mortality on first broods in most areas of Ontario. Unsuccessful pairs quickly renested and some were still able to fledge two broods during the 1990 nesting season.

Overall numbers were down slightly from the 1989 survey. The 1990 totals indicate that 7307 EABL's fledged from nestboxes, a decrease from 1989's total of 8260. This decrease can be explained by fewer reports being received in 1989. The number of monitored nestboxes decreased to 9209 from 1989's total of 11,426.

Fledged EABL's per nestbox monitored has actually increased to 0.79 from 0.72 in 1989. At this rate, if the number of reports for 1990 had been the same as that received in 1989, the fledged young total would actually have been higher.

The 1990 nestbox survey represents a total of 1369 EABL pairs in Ontario. If EABL pairs were not recorded on survey forms, the figure was calculated using an average of 4.8 fledged young per EABL pair.

A total of 638 EABL's were banded during the 1990 nesting season together with over twice that number of Tree Swallows (1376) and 7 House Wrens. Occupation of nestboxes by the usual other bird species occurred with 724 House Wrens, 3041 Tree Swallows, 40 Black-capped Chickadees and 64 House Sparrows fledged. Also reported as using the nestboxes were Purple Martins, a "finch" and a Great-crested Flycatcher.

The increase in well-managed nestbox trails throughout eastern North America will continue to be an important factor in the EABL's recovery. Population monitoring such as the OEBS nestbox survey will assist in that recovery.

Table 1 Summary of Eastern Bluebird breeding success in Ontario in 1990

County	Surveys	Boxes Monitored on Trail	Boxes Successful	Nestings Successful	Young Fledged	Unsuccessful Nestings	Blue Eggs	Eggs Nesting Natural Cavities	EABL Pairs Represented	House Wren	Tree Swallow	Black-capped Chickadee	House Sparrow	Banded EABL	Banded TRSW		
Algoma	1	24	24	2	2	4	2	8									
Atikokan	1		9														
Brant	1	10	10			21											
Bruce	6	855	855	204	327	973	79	839	39	194	241	471	3	11			
Dufferin	6	574	585	11	214	844	3	39	180	180	10	25	1				
Durham	5	43	62	4	5	23		24	1	4	12	17					
Elgin	4	187	187	12	14	223	8	78	4	52	1	7	1		223		
Essex	4	70	70	12	17	62	1	13	52	8	8	17			1		
Frontenac	1	9	9	3	4	19	1	20		5		1					
Grey	5	1545	1553	4	465	1625	3	17	340	207	858	14	18				
Haldimand-Notwick	8	250	284	38	25	353	7	91	76	13	18			2			
Halliburton	1	23	23														
Haltim	2	36	36	1	1	6	1	7	2	2	6	10					
Hamilton-Wentworth	7	304	318	54	10	147	2	216	3	43	7	137	1	1			
Hastings	3	53	50	8	8	32	7	43	16	9	2	21	1				
Huron	5	223	183	22	20	83	10	54	10	10	4	49	3				
Kenora	3	34	34	5	6	13	1	26	2	2		59	2				
Lambton	2	191	191	50	49	165	19	303	5	58	1	8					
Lanark	2	205	205	17	13	54	9	92			3	23	1				
Lennox & Addington	3	275	276	72	73	10	10	10		2	14	41	1				
Leeds - Grenville	4	71	71	21	29	96	3	108	3	26	57	98					
Lincoln	4	130	129	9	46	155	2	51	28	4	4	9					
Manitoulin	2	15	15					4	1	1		11					
Middlesex	3	36	36	2	1	4	3	6	2	2	4	8		1			
Muskoka	3	130	174	24	24	94	4	4	25	25		6	1				
Niagara	4	9	9	3	2	13	1	5	3	3	1	1					
Nipissing	1	31	31									9					
Northumberland	4	340	486	29	120	385	88	261	88	14	14	34					
Ottawa-Carleton	5	215	219	20	20	72	11	120	21	21	15	51	1	3	4		
Oxford	6	387	394	35	37	124	25	112	45	14	234	3			wren 7		
Parry Sound	4	55	55	9	11	44	1	50	9	1	26	1					
Peel	1	12	12	1	1	1	7	8	2	2	4						
Perth	3	125	125	21	18	68	1	17	17	30	7	56	1				
Peterborough	3	149	149	39	15	162	79	52	30	7	56	1					
Prince Edward	1	2	2									1					
Renfrew	2	794	794	138	138	509	10	406	146	7	177	3	2	5			
Simcoe	6	183	178	54	71	172	51	304	26	9	35	1	2				
Stornton/Dundas/																	
Glengarry	1	5	5														
Terniskaming	1	288	306	19	19	72	47	157	30	30	57						
Thunder Bay	2	21	21			70						1					
Victoria	1	6	6														
Waterloo	8	706	706	101	122	439	64	669	7	107	12	96	2	339	440		
Wellington	4	428	430	16	15	52	3	61	2	15	14	159	3	67	925		
York	3	141	204	47	35	138	17	173	33	33	36	193					
Miscellaneous	2	29	42														
Totals	148	9209	9563	1107	1977	7307	571	4444	177	16	1639	724	3041	40	64	638	1376

Ontario 1992 Eastern Bluebird Nestbox Survey

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Phone (____) _____

County where bluebird boxes are located: _____

If more than one county, number in each: _____

How many bluebird boxes did you monitor? _____ Total number of boxes on your trail? _____

How many times did you check your trail during during the nesting season? _____

Number of boxes used successfully¹ by Eastern Bluebirds? _____

Number² of successful Eastern Bluebird nestings (broods): _____

Number of young EABL's fledged³: _____ Unsuccessful Eastern Bluebird nestings⁴: _____

1. "Used successfully" means at least one bluebird was fledged. More than one nesting per box equals one box used successfully.
2. Include all Eastern Bluebird nestings in each box; for example, two broods raised in one box equals two successful nestings.
3. A young bird is said to be fledged when it leaves the nestbox on its own power.
4. Include in this category if a nest was built and eggs were laid but for some reason no Eastern Bluebirds fledged.

Blue White

Number of Eastern Bluebird eggs laid in boxes: _____

Number of EABL eggs known to have hatched: _____ Number of EABL eggs which did not hatch: _____

Number of eggs for which fate unknown: _____

Description of Box

Top opening: _____ Side Opening: _____ Front Opening: _____

Depth from bottom of hole to floor: _____ Inside dimensions: _____

Wood type and thickness: _____ Colour of box: _____

What sort of predator protection was used, if any? _____

Successful Nestings of Other Species:

House Wren: _____ Tree Swallow: _____

Black Capped Chickadee: _____ House Sparrow: _____

Banding Totals:

Eastern Bluebird: _____ Tree Swallow: _____

Name of Bander: _____

Number of years you have maintained a nestbox trail: _____

What methods were used to discourage House Sparrows? _____

Date of first Eastern Bluebird sighting in 1992 _____ Date of last Eastern Bluebird sighting in 1992: _____

Number of pairs of EABL's represented by your nestbox trail: _____ Has the population of EABL's in your area increased or decreased over the past 5 yrs.? ___ from 1991? _____

Number of pairs of Eastern Bluebirds in your area nesting in natural cavities _____

Where are your boxes located? Please circle:

Pastureland, open field, cereal crops (corn, barley, oats, wheat, etc.), hedgerow, woodland edge, railway tracks, lawn (any mowed area, park, golf course), cemetery, roadside, orchard, garden

If eggs or nestlings were lost, indicate the importance of the presumed cause, (Number - "1" for the most important to "8" for the least important):

Pesticides/herbicides: _____ Humans: _____ Raccoons: _____ House Wrens: _____

House Sparrows: _____ Squirrels: _____ Snakes: _____ Blowflies: _____

Weather: _____ Other: _____

Would you be willing to share your trail and experiences with others? _____

* Suggestions for changes in survey or overall comments:
* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

Did you receive C.W.I.P funding?
Yes: _____ No: _____

**Mail to: William F. Read
165 Green Valley Dr., #2,
Kitchener, Ontario N2P 1K3**