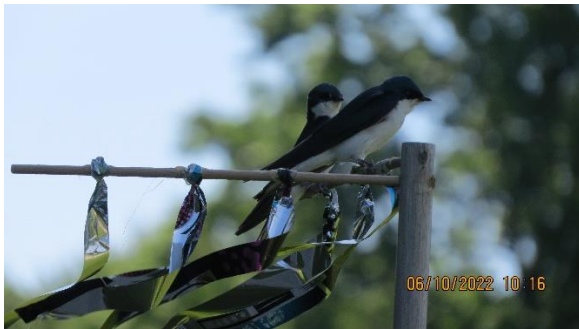


## BRAS Bluebird Newsletter July 2022

Mid- July is markedly different from mid-June on bluebird trails. It is much quieter and many nest boxes are empty of eggs and young by mid-July. First nestings of bluebirds are completed and, in many cases, the second nestings are almost done also. We see third nestings of bluebirds infrequently in our area but they could possibly still be starting a new nest even in July. Chickadees fledged all of their young in May and June and are done for the year. The large populations of tree swallows which use our nest boxes are usually done fledging by mid to late July and since they also have only one clutch per year the trails seem eerily quiet when the young tree swallows have left the boxes. They begin migrating to Florida and Central America in July and August. I always miss their intense defense of boxes and the beauty of their flight as they swoop to catch insects from the air to feed their young.

House wrens are very active in the last months of summer so expect to see new nestings of wrens up to early and mid-August. The non-native house sparrow of course does not give up any opportunity to take over a nest box and we see them raising young through August unfortunately. (Don't let your guard down! Keep checking boxes weekly until the end of July and then at least once more in early August.) Every year I hear a monitor say "I thought they were done" when a nest is discovered in late July or early August. You could still find bluebird, house wren or house sparrow nests in early August. It happens every year!



A pair of tree swallows rest on a sparrow spooker

A fledgling bluebird

Ant infestation is not uncommon to find in late June and July when the days are hot and humid. Ants are attracted to wet nesting material, broken eggs or dead young. They are there to "clean up" but hopefully if you find an ant infestation you will look for and remove the cause of their attraction to the box because they can sting and even kill young nestlings if left unchecked. A nest change is almost always needed when ants are seen in a box. To learn more about ant infestations check out <http://sialis.org/ants.htm>. Those long dry pesticide-free grasses you have been saving since late spring will be put to good use to build a replacement nest. Guidelines for creating a new nest can be found at <http://sialis.org/nestchange.htm>

The two photos below show an ant infestation in a bluebird box. The nest had been removed in preparation for cleaning out the ants and putting in a replacement nest. This box had two broken eggs which was the cause of the ants “clean up” presence.



An infestation of blowflies also can necessitate a nest change. Blowflies are more common in the hot humid days of June and July and are usually seen on the floor of the box when the regular nest checks are being done. They look like dark stubby maggots which attach themselves to the young nestlings and suck their blood especially at night. They can weaken the nestlings and if there are more than 10 blowflies per nestling it is a good idea to change the nest if possible. Check out this site for more info: <http://sialis.org/blowflies.htm>

The June 1<sup>st</sup> bluebird program count spreadsheet is completed and you can find it as a separate attachment to this newsletter email. If you find a needed correction or edit please notify me at [pennybrandau@gmail.com](mailto:pennybrandau@gmail.com) Thank you!

Many thanks to Stephanie Bevan who turned my raw numbers into such an attractive and organized spreadsheet! 😊 The spreadsheet is broken into three categories: the Black River Audubon Society bluebird trail results, the reports from private bluebird landlords in our area and lastly the report from the homeowners at Pioneer Ridge who have nestboxes. These separate categories are added together to provide the total number of eggs, chicks and fledglings of the four most common bird species which use nestboxes ( tree swallow, eastern bluebird, black capped chickadee and house wren).

The report gives a wealth of information about individual trail productivity and also private homeowner productivity. When compared to information from prior years we can also see trends which can possibly be related to climate change, trail management changes, habitat changes and bird population changes.

The numbers included in this June 1<sup>st</sup> count will be different from the final yearly summation which will be compiled in September. Please send me your final numbers by late August!

In 2022 the total number of tree swallow eggs on June 1<sup>st</sup> was 991 , chicks were 645 and none had fledged yet on that date. The potential number which could fledge this year, based on the June 1<sup>st</sup> count could be 1636. On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 the number of tree swallow eggs was 1312, chicks present were 270 and again none had fledged as of June 1<sup>st</sup>. The total potential which could have fledged last year would have been 1582. On June 1<sup>st</sup> of 2020 the number of tree swallow eggs was 1291 and there were only 107 chicks on that date and none that had fledged. Total potential fledge was 1398.

It is interesting to see that on the same date in these three consecutive years there were a higher percentage of eggs to chicks on June 1 in both 2020 and 2021 than this current year. For some reason a higher percentage of eggs had already hatched by June 1<sup>st</sup> in 2022. Probably weather related!? Its encouraging to see that the numbers of tree swallows are still strong in our program again this year and continue to rise.

The numbers of bluebird eggs, chicks and fledglings parallel the trends of the tree swallows in 2020, 2021 and in 2022 with a markedly higher percentage which had fledged by June 1 in 2022. Again, weather related? In 2020 there were a total of 262 bluebird eggs, 136 chicks and 91 fledglings on June 1. In 2021 there were a total of 205 bluebird eggs, 96 chicks and 156 fledglings on June 1. In 2022 there were 128 eggs, 103 chicks and 244 fledglings as of June 1<sup>st</sup>.

And now for a few photos of some of the “rock star” bluebird trail monitors who have faithfully monitored each box of their individual trails this year! Without them, this program couldn’t work at all! The thousands of fledglings each year are possible because of dedicated monitors!



On the previous page the Top left photo shows Deb Ackerman and Anni Pilisy who are monitors at the South Equestrian trail of Carlisle. The bottom left is Courtney Brennan who also is a monitor with Deb and Anni. Top right photo is Charlie Weil and Joe Gensert who monitor at the Carlisle Visitor Center. Bottom right is Cindy Amos who monitors The New Russia Township Cemetery trail in Oberlin with her husband Marc.

The photo below shows Val and Fred Farschman and their dog Barley checking their trail at High Meadows in Elyria. Monitor Sandy Kantelas is shown in the top right photo. Sandy monitors the trail at New Russia Township Park with Cortland Hill (not in this photo). Monitor Diane Lehman has managed the nestboxes at Bacon House in Vermilion Reservation for several years and bottom right shows Adele Straub who cares for the trail at Royal Oaks in Grafton.



Below left is John Porter who manages the bluebird trail at Caley Reservation and pictured in the right photo below is Larry Wilson and Arlene Ryan who co-manage the trail at Sandy Ridge Reservation in North Ridgeville.



Nina Love (pictured on the left) has faithfully coordinated the monitoring of boxes at Kendal of Oberlin for many, many years with a select group of other Kendal residents. Gwynn Beil is pictured in the right photo- she manages the nestboxes at Bur Oak Park in Elyria. I am so thankful for each of these monitors and the work they do every week to help our native birds have the best chance of successful nesting in our nestboxes.



Pictured in this newsletter were 16 monitors who collectively manage the 11 trails mentioned. However, there are actually a total of 31 trails in the Black River Audubon Society Bluebird program and over 46 experienced trail monitors. I could not list all of them in one bluebird newsletter so will continue to try to highlight a few in each issue!! 😊 The incredible jobs they each do as volunteers in spite of cold, heat, rain, ticks, tall grass, wasps, nestbox predators and competitors, sometimes heartbreaking disappointments inside nestboxes, and physical aches make them heroes in my eyes! This Bluebird program had the second highest number of fledgling bluebirds in the state of Ohio again last year because of the work they do! Truly, this world needs more people like our Black River Audubon Society bluebird volunteers! They set a high standard! “Thanks” is never enough to express how grateful we are for their labor of love!

