

BRAS Bluebird Newsletter November 2020

Fall came in all its glory and left us with a carpet of golden-brown crunchy leaves on the ground and bare branches on almost all the trees. Walks in woodland paths on warm sunny days brought a sense of well being even in the midst of the craziness of 2020, when many aspects of life seemed surreal and sometimes scary. I have found comfort in the peace of being surrounded by God's creation in nature and hope you have found this respite too.



In October a woolly bear worm found on a path at Olsen Park predicted a mild winter- it's middle orangish brown band was generously proportioned in relation to the dark end segments. "Mild" sounds nice to me! I hope it was an accurate prognosticator! Time will tell!

The nice fall weather allowed us to complete needed fall trail maintenance in record time this year. Pictured above are a pair of bluebird houses at Days Dam trail in Elyria. Due to increasingly overgrown areas and a corresponding increase in House wren nestings (and fewer and fewer bluebird and tree swallow nestings) we decided to finally discontinue this trail in

October. A praying mantis inside a baffle was safely relocated to a nearby bush during the process. It was a nice surprise to find this interesting large insect.

Fall maintenance involves evaluation of needed nestbox relocations, repairs, replacement of worn out boxes, and updates like adding predator guards. New replacement boxes were put on boxes 8 and 12 at LCCC. Forest Hills trail received new boxes at nestbox sites 1,2,6. New Russia township had three boxes replaced with new ones and High Meadows had 4 boxes replaced with new ones along with relocating 2 boxes and resetting a leaning pole at box #7. Hale Road had a box which was in a shrubby overgrown area relocated to a more open habitat and Crook Street trail had boxes 5 and 6 relocated due to encroaching pine trees at their previous location. Sandy Ridge had three boxes relocated and many boxes received upgraded Kingston predator guards to deter raccoons or chipmunks or snakes from entering the boxes. The Carlisle Equestrian Center had Kingston stovepipe predator guards added to all 50 of the nestbox poles at that location. All of the work was completed before the end of October. 😊 We always appreciate the prompt response from the Metro Parks when we request permission to do needed work on Park property. It's a LOT easier to complete in October's warm days than March's blustery freezing temperatures.

While the fall maintenance jobs were being completed, an amazing amount of work was being done on computers in the homes of Charlie Weil, Gina Swindell, Stephanie Bevan, Sandy Kantelas, Valerie Deptula and at my house. The weekly trail notes which the 46 bluebird trail monitors submitted in September were entered into Nestwatch, a citizen science program sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Notes about each visit to a nest box, each egg laid, each chick hatched and each fledgling that left the nestboxes have been entered into the database of Nestwatch and are valuable resources for scientific studies and research to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. This year information about 623 different nesting attempts, 2834 eggs laid, 2205 hatchlings, and 2004 fledglings was recorded into Nestwatch from nestbox records which were carefully kept by our dedicated bluebird trail monitors! If you see a bluebird in this area please take time to thank a monitor!! Their names are listed on the End of Year Summary Totals Spreadsheet attached to this emailed newsletter. Our monitors are incredibly dedicated and it is possible to see bluebirds on walks at almost any park in our county only because of their efforts! We are deeply grateful for all of the trail and home monitors who submitted information about nesting attempts and for the volunteer computer whizzes who entered the extensive information into the Nestwatch website database! All of this work was completed before the end of October! Thank you! Thank you! It truly takes a small village!

The End of Year Summary Spreadsheet lists information from the Black River Audubon Society Bluebird trails and also information from private homeowners who monitored bluebird nestboxes on their property. Please let me know if I have inadvertently made any errors on this summary. It was thrilling to see that even though our bluebirds lost over 130 eggs or chicks in early May due to snow and very cold temperatures, they re-nested rapidly and actually ended

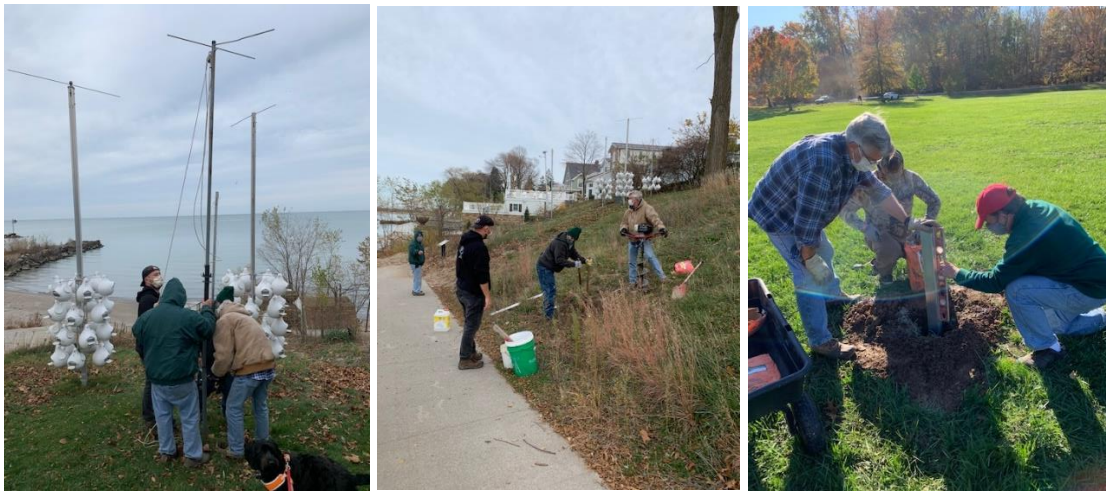
up with more fledglings than we have ever recorded in our program! In 2019 there were 721 bluebird fledglings and this year in 2020 we had 834 bluebird fledglings! Yeah!

The number of tree swallows fledged was 1268 this year and 1212 last year. House wrens had 218 fledglings in 2020 and 202 in 2019. We had no successful black capped chickadee fledglings this year but did have 19 last year. Possibly increased House wren activity was a contributing factor in no successful Black Capped chickadee nestings? There were reports of 25 barn swallows which were monitored until they fledged and 10 Carolina wrens which fledged. 😊

The program coordinator for the American Kestrel program, Larry Wilson reported less kestrel fledglings this year... only 2 of the 4 eggs hatched and fledged.

John Ryan, program coordinator for the Purple Martin Program reported 243 PUMA fledglings at his home, 119 at Lakeview Park and 17 at Mill Hollow for a total of 379 purple martin fledglings! Wow! Thank you Larry and John for your hard work on behalf of kestrels and purple martins!

Lakeview and Mill Hollow Purple Martin colonies both had new poles put in this fall by John Ryan and helpers Fritz Brandau, Josh Vardous and John's friend Larry.



Bluebirds enjoy feeders in the colder weather as seen in above photos although it is easier to train them to eat from a bluebird feeder during the summer. Suet and dry mealworms are

enjoyed by bluebirds and of course live mealworms are a treat (but will die quickly in freezing temperatures and become black and inedible). Planting native plants helps attract bluebirds to your home in the winter also since bluebirds eat more seeds and berries during cold weather. A heated birdbath is very attractive to bluebirds and other birds. I think it is well worth the cost of the birdbath for the pleasure of seeing them up close during wintertime! We love ours!



“What a divine experience it is to watch and be a small part of this”

Ron, (Bluebird Listserv), 2005

Wishing you peace, joy and bluebirds! Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

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