

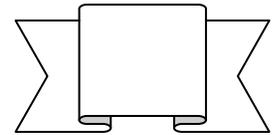
Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

Volume Six ~ Spring 2006

Editor: G Tietz

2006 is Starting as a Great One!

Bluebirds spotted in February? What indeed?!? It seems that the winters are getting so very mild that the bluebird is reluctant to move to warm southern grounds each year. There were reports of the bluebird in southern and west central Alberta throughout February. It seems that the Robin, also the thrush family, was also spotted throughout the winter this year! Let's all hope that this is the sign of a great year for the bluebirds once they set up in all of our boxes across the province. Happy Bluebirding!



Announcing:

"Banding Techniques & Efficient Record Keeping Workshops"

Mountain Bluebird Trails will be presenting the opportunity to attend on Saturday June 10th **OR** Saturday June 24th, 2006. Come and enjoy shared knowledge on the long term efforts of Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society, attendees will receive a certificate and a manual. Workshop will run from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00, lunch and refreshments will be provided. Workshops will be held at the ATCO auditorium on Stafford Drive in Lethbridge. Cost is \$10 (to cover manual, lunch and refreshments). RSVP to Gwen @ 553-2780.

We need your help! This will be open to the general public interested in joining us in the conservation effort to maintain the mountain bluebird and tree swallow populations. If you are an existing monitor **OR** a bander we are **looking for mentors and trainers** to assist with this continued effort. If you are interested please call us, we need help to grow and in our effort to maintain trails that currently are not maintained. **All** existing members **must** attend a workshop this year **OR** in 2007 in order to continue to receive bands into 2008. Environment Canada/Canadian Wildlife Service **requires** all banders to have the updated training even if they have banded birds in the past.

The Board of Mountain Bluebirds Trails Conservation Society wishes to thank you in advance for your continued support. In order to guarantee the future of our efforts we must comply with the strictly enforced regulations beyond our control. Establishing future membership and consistent data remittances has become a long term goal of the Society and is a requirement of our banding license. We view uniform training methods as a successful solution. Feel free to contact us if you have questions.



MBT Board of Directors

"Today's Thoughts"

One evening an old man told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

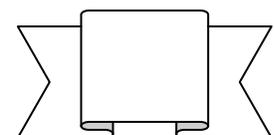
He said, "My son, the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all.

One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The old man simply replied, "The one you feed".



Vice-President's Message

'Changing of the Guard'

Mountain Bluebird Trails is about to enter one of its most challenging years ever. We have undergone a real 'double whammy', with both the president and vice-president retiring from the society. Ray Harris and Harold Janecke both leave big holes as they were incredibly dedicated to the mountain bluebird and the MBT. Their years of service and experience are irreplaceable. Thank you and we will strive to maintain the course you both have set.

The new executive for the 2005/06 season, as elected at the Annual General Meeting held in October, is as follows:

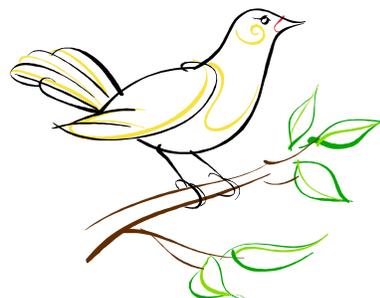
Vice-President:	Ken Mackintosh
Treasurer:	Dave Friebel
Secretary:	Eleanor Thomson
Band Manager/ Newsletter Editor:	Gwen Tietz
Directors:	Joe Michielson Duncan Rand Lynn Bell Max Goodfellow

As usual, anything of real importance requiring accuracy and meeting deadlines has been and will continue to be done by Gwen Tietz - thank-you! We are still in need of someone interested to fill the position of President, as well as some more directors. Many hands make light work. The more people involved in MBT, the more successful we will be in our mandate of helping the mountain bluebird. Anyone interested, please call me.

Spring is almost upon us - a season of renewal. The miracle of the mountain bluebirds returning after their long winter trip has arrived. We at MBT also hope for renewal - in interest and helping hands. To that end, we will be holding a training seminar in the spring. Gwen is in the process of putting together a monitoring/banding manual which will be presented at the seminar. This will be a big help to everyone in managing their trails and a great introduction to newcomers to bluebirding. This is very timely as the government requirements in this area are becoming more restrictive and it is very important for us to be very diligent in our procedures and record keeping.

As MBT enters this new era, we can be sure that the mountain bluebirds will hold up their end of the bargain. It is up to us to do our part! Have a great season.

Ken Mackintosh



“Questions & Answers”

Q. Is there anything I can feed bluebirds besides mealworms?

A. Homemade Bluebird Suet

Recipe 1

- Mix equal parts:
- Chunky peanut butter
- Crisco
- Karo syrup
- Melt in a pan over low heat. Let cool and stir in yellow cornmeal to a flaky consistency. Keep it in a tupperware container and feed it twice a day.

Recipe 2

- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter
- 2 cups quick cook oats
- 2 cups cornmeal (plain)
- 1 cup lard (do not substitute)
- 1 cup white flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- Optional: 1 cup wild bird seed, nuts raisins, dried fruit
- Melt lard and peanut butter. (Micro-wave works best.) Add remaining ingredients. Mix in large bowl, fill a wire cage and hang on a shepard pole or crumble on platform feeder.

Q. What can I plant in my yard to help attract Bluebirds?

A. First, the obvious - plant a birdbath. Water, especially running or dripping is a great attraction. Just make it easy enough to be able to clean it out easily and if the weather is hot, clean it daily. Check your zone to see if they will grow.

TREES

Red Cedar, Rocky Mountain Cedar, Black Cherry, Pin Cherry, Chokecherry, Dogwood, Hackberry, American Holly, American Mountain Ash, Black Tupelo, Red Mulberry, Sassafras, Shadbush, Serviceberry.

SHRUBS

Northern Bayberry, American Blackberry, American Black Current, Highbush Blueberry, Red Chokecherry, Highbush Cranberry, Gray Dogwood, Red-osier Dogwood, Silky Dogwood, American Elder, Black Huckleberry, Inkberry, Nannyberry, Pokeweed, Pasture Rose, Smooth Sumac, Staghorn Sumac, Winterberry.

VINES

American Bittersweet, Wild Grape, Mistletoe, Virginia Creeper

Q. The male bluebird keeps attacking my window, what is wrong with him?

A. They will often be found doing the same thing to your vehicle's mirrors. Bluebirds are extremely territorial. The thought behind this is that he probably sees his reflection in the window and thinks it is another bluebird invading his territory. You need to find a way to "block" the reflection he is seeing. If it's a vehicle mirror, try covering it with a plastic grocery bag.

Source: <http://www.rosebudm.com/bluebird/>

Mountain Bluebird Trivia

Habitat and habits

The Mountain Bluebird's preferred habitat is sparsely treed grasslands. They require cavities for nesting. During winter, Mountain Bluebirds travel in flocks, often with Western Bluebirds and Sparrows, and feed on insects and small fruit, such as mistletoe, hackberry, and currants. They typically begin to move north in March, but often arrive in northern latitudes when snow still blankets much of the ground and temperatures still dip below -20°C. These hardy birds can usually withstand short spells of cold and stormy weather; however, during prolonged severe conditions they may freeze or starve to death.

Mountain Bluebirds sometimes migrate alone but more often travel in flocks of up to 50 birds (rarely up to 200). They travel during the day at a leisurely pace, stopping frequently to feed. They can sometimes be seen strung like brilliant blue jewels along a barbed wire fence, scanning bare patches of ground for weed seeds and dead insects. Highly aggressive birds, they usually sit at least a metre apart. There is a continual flashing of blue, as first one and then another leaves its perch momentarily to pick up a tasty morsel.

Breeding

Before the tail end of the migration has passed through, resident Mountain Bluebirds have fanned out over areas with suitable nesting habitat. Sparsely treed grasslands, wooded ravines and valleys, badlands, and mountains all meet the nesting requirements of Mountain Bluebirds, but they tend to avoid treeless plains.

The males often arrive first, and waste little time in searching out suitable nesting sites: woodpecker excavations and decayed cavities in trees are used where available. In the treeless badlands, bluebirds nest in cracks and crevices of steep eroding hillsides. In built-up areas, they move into machinery, nooks and crannies in buildings, fence-posts, and utility poles. Recently, the birdhouse has become an important nesting site.

Once the male has found cavities to his liking, he entices a prospective mate to inspect them. The male goes in and out of each cavity, fluttering excitedly about the female and calling continually, all in an effort to have her accept the site. This exuberant display may last, off and on, for hours or even days, until a female finally condescends to try out the cavity for size. She decides whether to accept or reject the site.

After a nest site is agreed upon, both birds defend the immediate area. The female builds the nest of dry grass stems and finer plant material, including thin strips of soft bark, while the male oversees her activities and guards against intruders. This process may take anywhere from two days to more than a week.

Soon after completing the nest, the female lays one egg each day until the clutch, usually with five or six eggs, is complete. Occasionally there are up to eight eggs in a clutch.

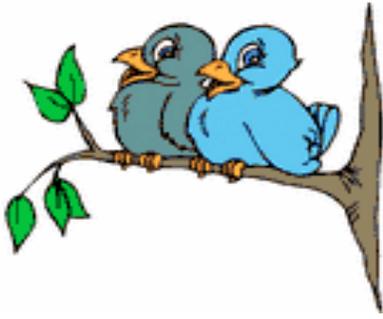
Incubation, or warming of the eggs until they hatch, starts after the final egg is laid and lasts for approximately 13 days. Only the female performs this task. She sits on the eggs all night and most of the day, leaving the nest briefly to feed. Occasionally, the male brings food to his mate.

After the eggs hatch, the blind, naked, and helpless fledglings must be fed. The female spends much of her time the first week brooding, or sitting on the young birds to keep them warm, and feeding them with food delivered by the male. On a diet of insects, including beetles, cutworms, and grasshoppers, the fledglings grow rapidly, doubling their body weight two or three times during the first week of life. The young birds' droppings come encased in a sac that can be carried away by the adults, so the nest remains clean for the first week or two. At 14 days of age the tiny bodies are nearly completely feathered, and the young leave the nest at about 18 to 21 days, although the timing of fledging is quite variable. Bluebirds are able to fly about 100 m on their first rather haphazard flight.

The young are wholly dependent for about three days, and may not be fully independent until two months later. Approximately half of adult pairs prepare a nest for a second brood. This is usually built in the same cavity. The second clutch of eggs is about one egg smaller than the first. If the eggs or young of any brood are destroyed by predators, the bluebirds will avoid the nesting site for the rest of the season and may move as much as 200 km to establish a new nest site.

Groups of one or more families and other individuals remain in the area throughout the summer and autumn until cold weather drives them south for another winter.

Source: <http://www.ffdp.ca/hww2>



Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

Volume Six ~ Fall
2006

Editor: G Tietz

Absolutely Fabulous!

Well, all reports have the summer of 2006 as a *bumper season* for the bluebirds! Seems that many of our banders, including myself, could not get out to band for the second brood but the statistics still reflect a fabulous year!

It seems that although the amount of eggs produced was down, the bluebirds fledged was up significantly. Sterile and abandoned eggs were down compared to previous years, this contributed to a drastic increase in the amount of birds banded and fledglings. Not to mention the cooperative weather throughout the spring and summer. No spring storms were experienced, yet heavy frosts in some areas caused the reported dead nestlings.

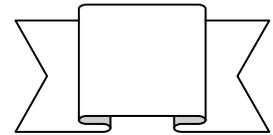
Recoveries seemed to be down, I recovered a male banded 30 yards away 4 years prior as an L-U. Also reported was a bird recovered by Don Conrad of High River, banded by Gwen Tietz.

Again, many thanks to the long term commitments of our members for their continued support of the Mountain Bluebirds conservation efforts. Without your continued work and efforts the Bluebirds would not continue to increase in population in southern Alberta. Good job and many thanks to all of you!

Please contact us with your thoughts on the Society's future and continued efforts.

MBTCS Contact Information: P.O. Box 401 Stn. Main
Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Z1

Vice-President:	Ken Mackintosh 345-5806
Interim Treasurer:	Joe Michielson 345-4777
Secretary:	Eleanor Thomson
Band Manager/ Newsletter Editor:	Gwen Tietz 553-2780
Directors:	Duncan Rand Lynn Bell Max Goodfellow



“Annual General Meeting Notice”

Saturday, October 28th

2:00 p.m.

Fish & Game Building

1001 9 Ave South

Lethbridge, AB

Speakers:

Eleanor Thomson & Katherine Russell

Informative Slideshow

\$5.00 donation appreciated

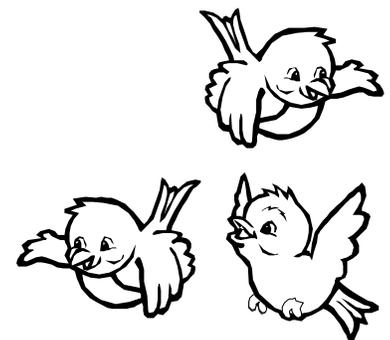
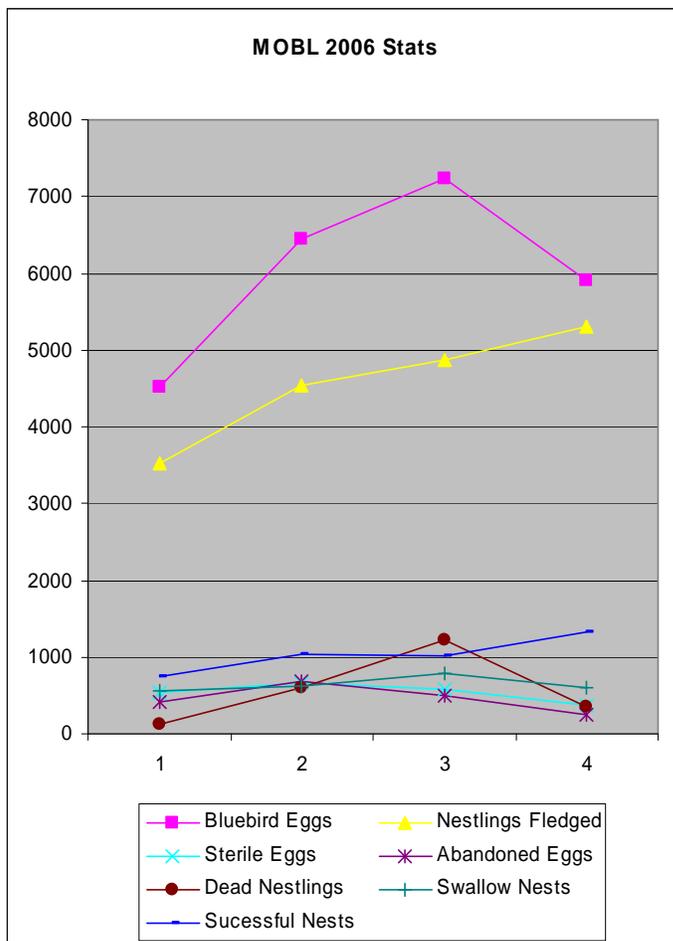
See you there!



MOBL 2006 Statistics

	2002	2003 (1)	2004 (2)	2005 (3)	2006 (4)
Boxes available	2085	2088	2062	2162	1907
Successful nests	676	756	1026	1024	1331
Bluebird eggs	5274	4522	6453	7237	5900
Sterile eggs	1810	530	660	579	363
Abandoned eggs		405	684	503	241
Dead nestlings	462	132	596	1230	352
Nestlings fledged	3145	3529	4545	4866	5296
Adults banded	148	116	106	154	77
Nestlings banded	2148	2507	2701	2583	3149
Recoveries	73	62	96	103	77
Tree swallow nests	535	568	623	788	609
Wren nests	14	20	18	49	22
Sparrow nests	30	34	36	39	63
Stolen/vandalized	35	32	57	52	27
Used twice	149	492	302	428	306

Band Issuance	MOBL
No/bands issued/2006	4948
No/bands USED/2006	3526
Bands returned in 2006	1422
No/bands issued/2005	5254
No/bands USED/2005	3122
Bands returned in 2005	2132
No/bands issued/2004	3810
No/bands USED/2004	3073
Bands returned in 2004	737
No/bands issued/2003	4467
No/bands USED/2003	2623
Bands returned in 2003	1844
No/bands issued/2002	3838
No/bands USED/2002	2307
Bands returned in 2002	1531
No/bands issued/2001	4107
No/bands USED/2001	2880
Bands returned in 2001	1227
No/bands issued/2000	4358
No/bands USED/2000	3324
Bands returned in 2000	1034



MEMORANDUM TO BANDERS #89 (Spring 2006) (Excerpts)

New Program for Managing Banding Data

A new bander data management program is on its way. The new, yet to be named, software will eventually replace Band Manager as the North American Banding Program's key tool for bander data management and submission. The new program will have all the current features of Band Manager and some new ones, such as a basic mapping feature. Most importantly, it will be user-friendly and usable on both Windows-based PC and Macintosh operating systems. The program interface is created in FileMaker, which is a cross-platform program that allows for user modification. The Bird Banding Office will continue to accept banding data from Band Manager.

Web Reporting

The Bird Banding Laboratory has been improving its Web page for reporting encounters, with more great improvements to come at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/bblretrv/webrec.cfm>. Those reporting bands via the website will soon get banding information automatically and will be able to print out the Certificate of Appreciation immediately. The Bird Banding Office is working with the Bird Banding Laboratory so that users will be able to report in French, English, or Spanish using either miles or kilometres. Once these changes have been made, we will provide a link from the Bird Banding Office website.

If you report encounters through the Bird Banding Laboratory web "encounter" page, please keep the band and a record of the report until the Certificate of Appreciation arrives. This will make it easier for you or the person reporting the band to respond to correspondence from the Bird Banding Office if more information is required for the encounter report.

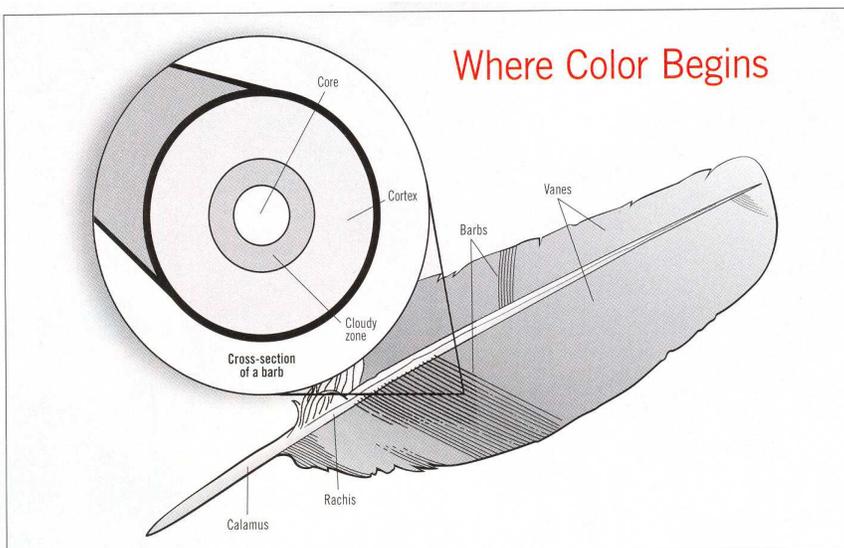
What Makes Feathers Blue?

Unlike virtually every other feather color, no pigment turns feathers blue. We've known that for decades. Instead, it's long been thought that a layer of cells on blue birds' feathers reflected light at blue wavelengths, similar to the phenomenon that makes the sky blue. Now, however, scientists have another explanation.

To find the source of blue color, we have to drill down past the barbs and barbules to the "nanostructural" level of the cloudy zone. Nanostructure refers to a size close to the length of light waves. Nanostructures are measured in nanometers. We know them indirectly by studying their effects.

In the cloudy zone of blue feathers, the melanin and air cavities are so close that the distance between them is shorter than a wavelength of light, according to research by Richard O. Prum Yale University and his colleagues. When scattering elements are this small, they interact with light through a process called constructive interference. The nanostructural array in blue feathers scatters light in an orderly way. The scattered light waves are in phase and reinforce each other.

You can explore the uniqueness of blue feathers by observing a feather in different light conditions. In the shade, a Blue Jay's feather will appear gray because the intrinsic gray-brown color of the melanin pigments is visible. Looking through the feather to the light, you'll see just the gray-brown color of melanin as light passes through the feather. When you place it so that light falls directly upon it and is reflected to your eye, the feather will appear blue. Try the same with a cardinal's feather and it will be red every time.



Smash Hit!

"Banding Techniques & Efficient Record Keeping Workshops"!

Mountain Bluebird Trails Held workshops on Saturday June 10th & Saturday June 24th, 2006. Both workshops were well attended by both experienced banders, the general public and new monitors. The board of Mountain Bluebirds would like to welcome and congratulate the following:

Jerry Kylo, Nellie Kadijk, Jake Kadijk, Jim Franz, Jane Franz, Adelle Pauls, John Nightingale, Ross Westbrook, Lynn Bell, Marilyn Maufort, Gertrude Marcel, Jean Gregg, Roxanne Mackenzie

A very special thank you to Ken Mackintosh for his assistance and quite enjoyable slideshow, great trail tidbits Ken! And of course many thanks to Les Sarsfield for assisting with the room setup and pack up at the end of the presentation. A special note to Lucky's Bingo for the overhead projector usage and the delicious lunches provided for the attendees. And of course we can't forget the loan of the clubhouse belonging to the Downtown Optimist Club of Lethbridge. Many thanks as our success is due to the help of many others! Thank you, thank you!

We still need your help! If you are an existing monitor OR a bander we are **looking for mentors and trainers** to assist with this continued effort. If you are interested please call us, we need help to grow and in our effort to maintain trails that currently are not maintained. Currently we have 350 bluebird boxes that need monitoring! **Can you help us?** Some of our very dedicated banders/monitors need your help! We have one trail that needs "temporary" maintenance and another that needs a permanent replacement monitor/bander in training. We have aligned a few of our members to train new members in effective trail management. **Contact us if you can help!**

The Board of Mountain Bluebirds Trails Conservation Society wishes to thank you in advance for your continued support. In order to guarantee the future of our efforts we must comply with the strictly enforced regulations beyond our control. Establishing future membership and consistent data remittances has become a long term goal of the Society and is a requirement of our banding license. We view uniform training methods as a successful solution. Feel free to contact us if you have questions.

MBT Board of Directors



PLAN
For the Future

Donations Graciously Accepted

In order to cover the cost of the postage and newsletter productions we would like to request all those that receive it to donate. Mountain Bluebirds Conservation Society is a non-profit Society and we do issue receipts for amounts over \$10. Please mail your donation to:

**MBT
P.O. Box 401
Lethbridge, AB
T1J 3Z1**