

Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

“Mrs. Carol Porter”

It is with great sadness that I have to mention that Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society has lost yet another *long time member*. Carol Porter was the area coordinator for the Medicine Hat region in south eastern Alberta. Annually, Carol was issued 300-500 bands and she in turn worked closely with a group of fine volunteers to assist her with the banding and monitoring project. Without delay she always had her group banding statistics back to me well before the September 1st deadline. Carol was still active with MBT up to her recent passing of March 5, 2009.

I will always remember the cheerful and sincerely dedicated individual Carol conveyed, what a fine person to have represented our small group of people. Every time we met over the years she was always positive and embraced change eagerly which made the distance to the Medicine Hat group not so vast. Carol was the glue that kept that group together. Each of you in that area must be made aware that even with the loss of Carol we fully intend to continue the monitoring and banding operation well into the future.

Milton Spitzer has been handed all the reins for the existing group and we hope to assist him with the continuance of your efforts. With that in mind, 2009 may prove a challenge as the issuance of bands will likely have to come directly from myself. Currently, we are in the process of transitioning the information needed to get the existing members into our system. We would like to ask all to be understanding with us as the group is entering into another busy training, monitoring and banding season. The banding and monitoring packages will be issued with this newsletter; if you are from the Medicine Hat group your packages may be slightly delayed. Milton intends to attend the “Information Seminar/Banding Workshop” and we hope to have your packages ready to distribute directly to each of you.

And to Carol’s family... we all appreciate everything Carol did for us over the years. All of MBT wishes to convey our sincere regrets to your loss of such a dear person. Carol has left a timeless legacy with the work she did as a volunteer for many different groups in southern Alberta. Be proud of her, she was a very special person indeed. Our thoughts go out to the Porter family at this time.

*Very sincerely, Gwen Tietz
MBT Director*

Volume Nine ~ Spring 2009

Editor: G Tietz



“Information Seminar/Banding Workshop”

Saturday, April 25th, 2009

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Fish & Game building

1001 9 Ave South

Lethbridge, AB

\$10 fee (*lunch & refreshments*)

Limited Seating!

Mentors needed!

RSVP: 553-2780-Gwen

345-5806-Ken



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By the time Gwen puts out this newsletter we should be able to check and repair our boxes and clean any that still need it, before our Bluebirds start looking for a nesting site.

Since the fall newsletter a few things have happened with regards to the organization. First we had our Annual General Meeting which was well attended and Gwen gave a great talk on her travels down south, but, I still haven't seen the invitation to join her on her next 'work' trip. We, MBT, have decided to host a conference in 2010 and will have had an organizational meeting by the time this is printed. We will be looking to recruit help since this will be a major undertaking. Also Gwen has offered to hold another workshop; this spring in will be in Lethbridge. The details are in the newsletter so if you know people that may be interested give them the info.

I've been picking up newly constructed boxes from the Lethbridge Correctional Institution. Goldie has them doing a great job and he has offered to continue this year. Also we had a few built by an Edmontonian who's son lives in Lethbridge. Thanks, Dell Huget for doing that.

Rick Swihart of the Lethbridge Herald wrote an article on our organization after interviewing Gwen and I, late last fall and has offered to write an update on the spring BB events.

Hopefully, some of you can attend our workshop in April and bring an interested friend. We'd like to have a few more people banding but it's great that we were able to catch up on monitoring the boxes we have in the field. I'm crossing my fingers that this spring will have more suitable weather for our blue friends to raise their broods. I need to get out early to replace a few old weathered lids to the new larger ones. I plan to build a few lids as replacements using the tops that Dell's dad built for us.

Enough rambling – good luck with your trails and thanks for being part of our worthwhile organization.

Sincerely, Joe Michielson

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Max Goodfellow

Gwen Tietz

Master Permit/Band Manager Stats/

Newsletter Editor: Gwen Tietz 553-2780

Volunteers Needed!

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. **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!**



2010 MBT Conference: Lethbridge

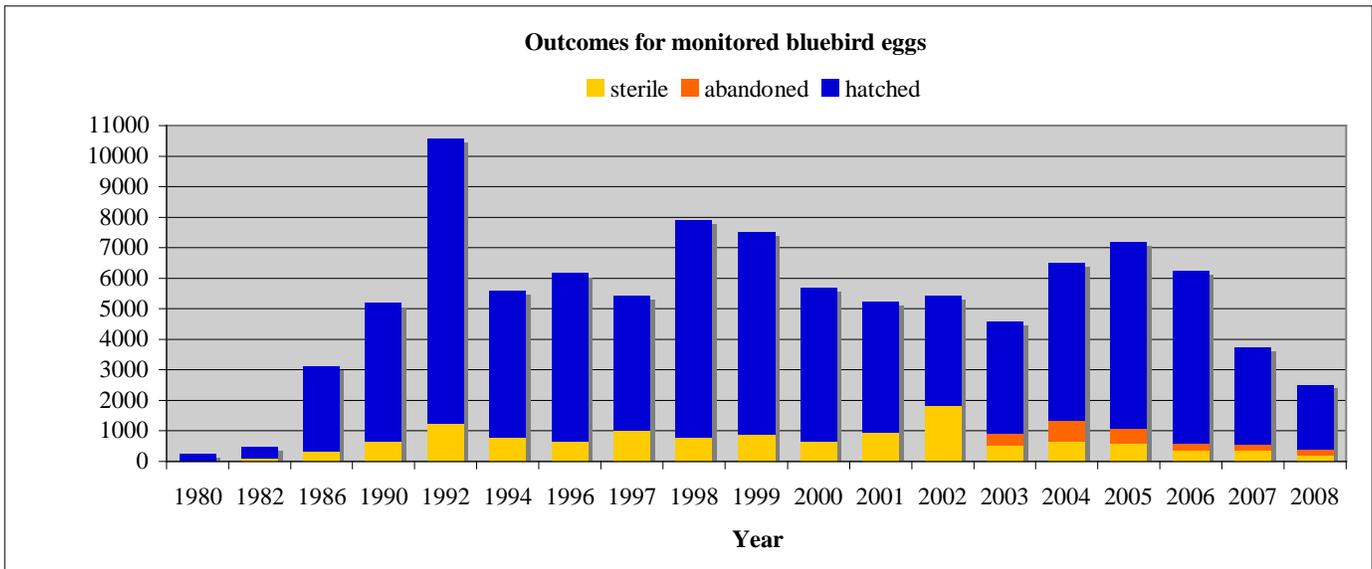
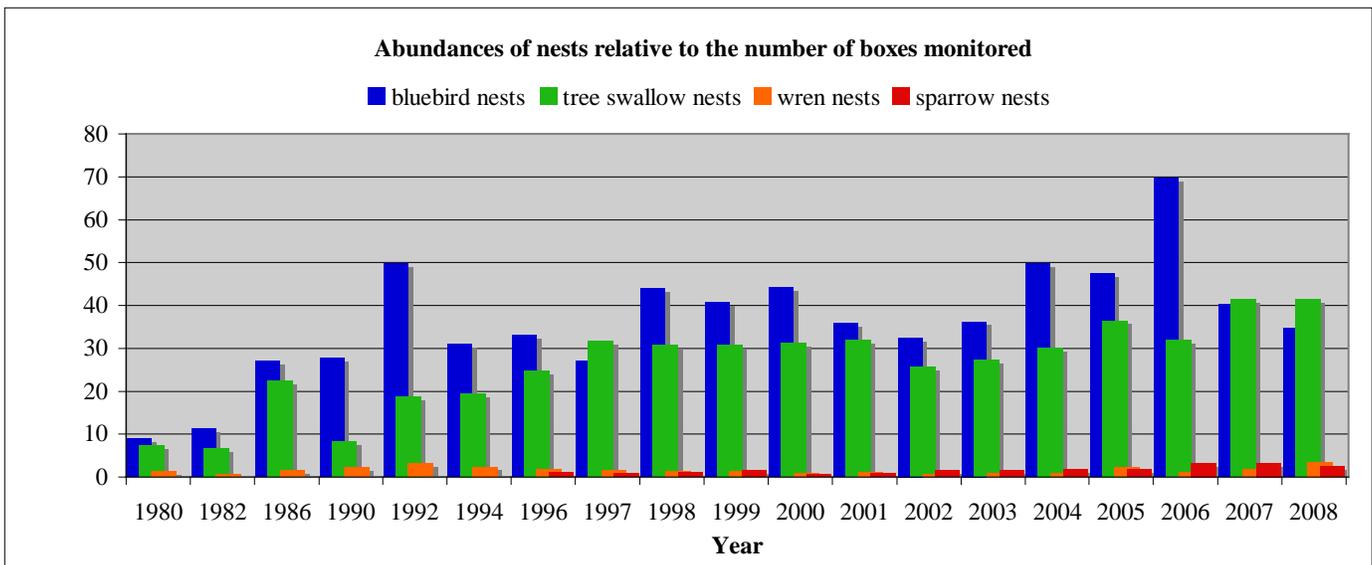
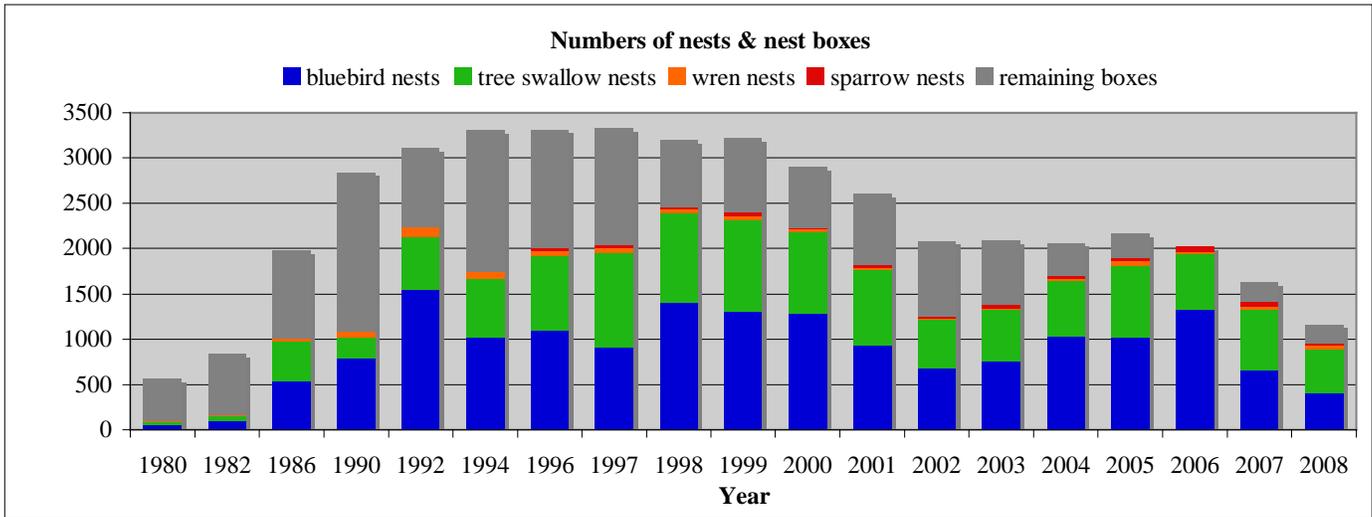
Wow! It has been a few years now but we have decided to have our very own MBT Conference right here in Lethbridge, Alberta. Can you help us? **Calling ALL volunteers!** Can you help us for an hour or the whole conference? Can you assist us with a role on a planning committee? Call us! **HELP!** Joe: 403-345-4777, Ken: 403-345-5806, Gwen: 403-553-2780

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 the banding permit. We view uniform training methods as a successful solution. Feel free to contact us if you have questions.

MBT Board of Directors

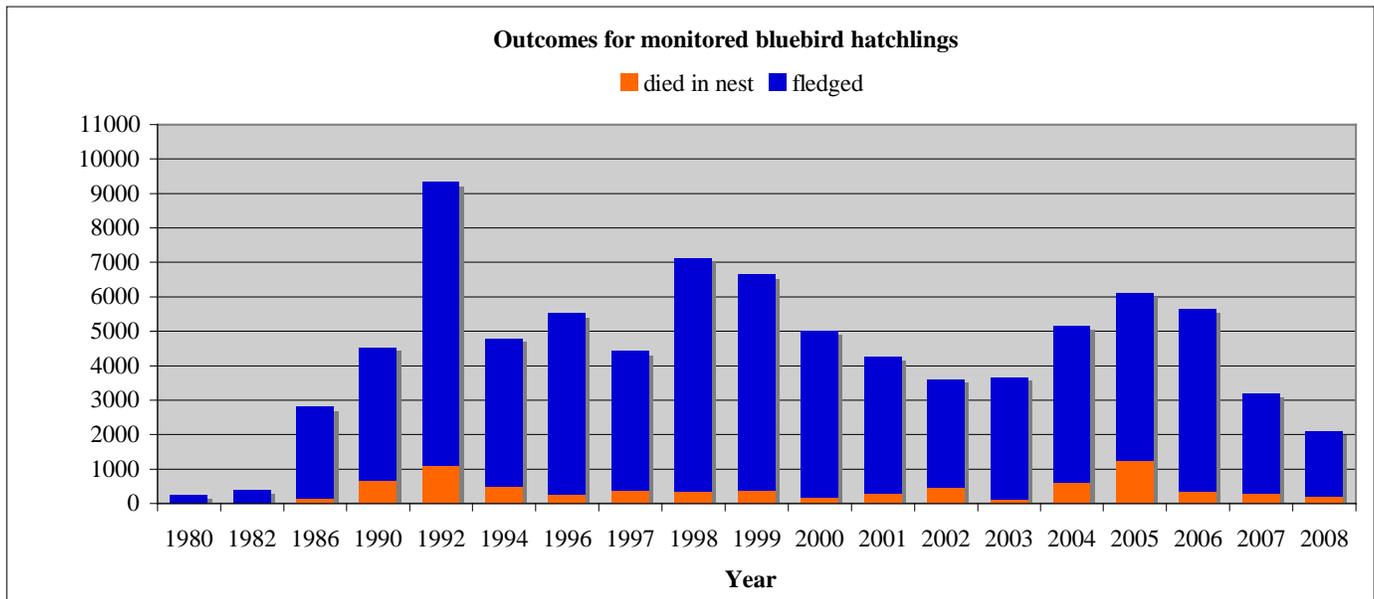
MBT Historical Statistics Using A Fresh New Look!

Compliments of: Lori Goater



MBT Historical Statistics Using A Fresh New Look!

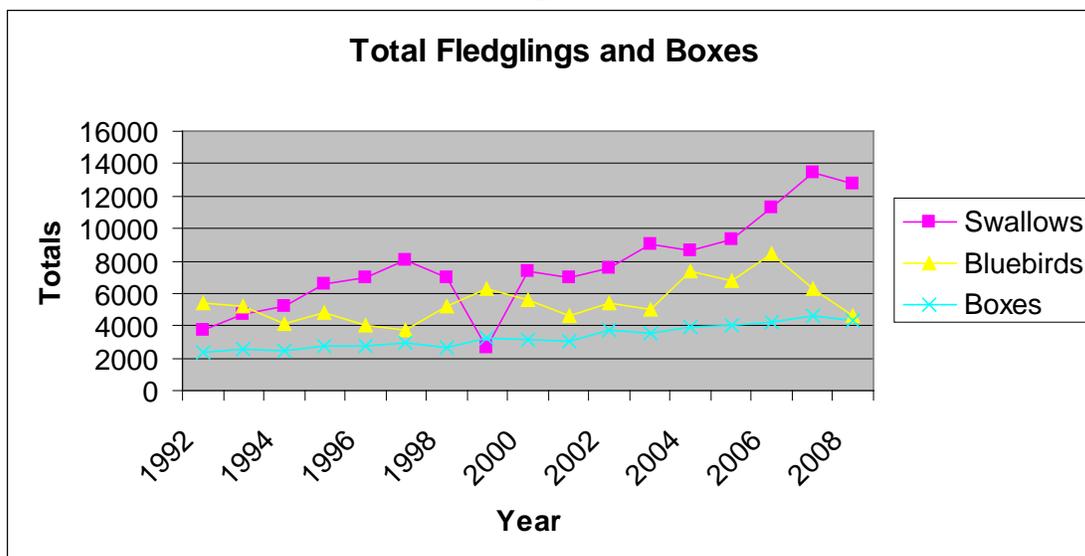
Compliments of: Lori Goater



Special thanks to Lori Goater for this historical retake on statistics collected, sure clears up a few questions doesn't it? I, for one, have been thinking about a few of the points conveyed.



Calgary Area Bluebird and Tree Swallow Monitors Annual Report for 2008



While the number of total boxes declined somewhat, both species declined quite a bit, MOBL markedly.

Thanks to Don Stiles, Calgary Data Compiler/Master Permit Holder

Just A Short Note

Well, another “bluebird” season is upon us. Happily I can report that many people have contacted me and reported the sighting of the lovely brilliantly coloured males. I was in the Pass mid March and spotted 2 blue flashes in front of my vehicle. Yes, they are back and it seems to me that the jump start my heart gets each spring with my initial sighting has not lessened even after this many years. Somehow the return of the bluebird means that the dreaded winter is now over, whew!

Enclosed with this newsletter some of you will receive a monitor or a banding package. Please note that the inventory of bands is far less than in previous years, this is a chronic issue with the Banding Office supplies. **IF** you need more throughout the season please do contact me at either 403-553-2780 (home) or 403-317-1252 (cell) and I will do my best to get more to you right away. **You should make sure to allow time for the shipment of bands, or the delivery via my ever travelling “road show” at this time of year.**

On a side note, some of you have practiced a method for many years that may not be in the interest of others in the future.if you remove bands provided from the strands provided, “pre-open” them and place them in/on an independent “container” prior to use you may not be aware of the unintentional weakening of the band. If you do not use these bands and rework the band, a second time, in order to return them at the year end you have stressed the material in the band. When these bands in particular are opened, closed and reopened multiple times they rarely close properly. Remember, a band can not be placed on a bird if it inhibits movement in any way, hence it is destroyed.

Most of our banders are provided with **complete and new** packages each year. All “left over” bands on strands returned are used the following year by two banders. “Used” defective bands are reported as destroyed and can not be used. Band supply is of concern and all of us wish to continue to band in the future. **Please help us reduce the amount of destroyed bands to insure all of us the right to band in the years to come.**

Thanks once again for all your tireless efforts.

Gwen Tietz



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**



Telling all Photographers!

MBTCS is still accumulating pictures and videos to continually improve the PowerPoint template for the use of Education and Informative Presentations.

Do you have photos or videos that others could use for educational presentations?

Call or email us and we can forward a copy of a PowerPoint template for all MBT speakers. You can still email your pictures and videos to:

mtnblue@telus.net

Thanks for your help!



Bluebird Trails Bluebird (MBT)

Annual Convention in Great Falls, Montana

June 12 – 14, 2009

Holiday Inn

Call 1-800-257-1998

(Be sure to tell them "MTB" for special room rate)

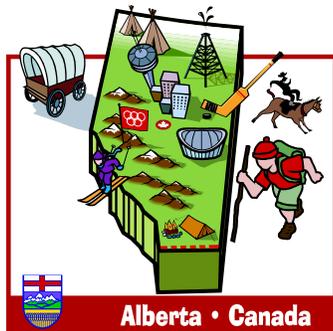
2009 Mountain Bluebird Trails Convention Speakers

- ***Bill Thompson, III** – Editor of the popular Bird Watcher's Digest, writer of "Bird Watching for Dummies" and "Bird Watching: A Year Round Guide".
- ***Al Batt** – writer, speaker, storyteller and humorist. Writer for several newspaper columns, carton strips and his own radio show.
- ***Julie Zickefoose** – widely published natural history writer and artist. Books include "Enjoying Bluebirds More" and "Letters From Eden".
- ***Scott Johnson** – Professor of Biology at Towson University, Baltimore. Currently studying bluebird behavior in Big Horn, Wyoming.
- ***Steve Schaller** – Education Coordinator at the Lewis & Clark Centre in Great Falls. World traveler and passionate bird watcher, come enjoy his presentation on birds observed in various countries he has visited.

***Fay E. Schaller** – Interpreter at the Lewis & Clark Centre in Great Falls. Shares the legends behind native plants of Montana.

To register and find more information:

www.mountainbluebirdtrails.com



LOOKING FOR A HOBBY?

Calling all "handy men"! Currently we have a stockpile of bluebird boxes tucked away to distribute to existing monitors and banders. ***BUT***, this will not last forever! Can you help us?

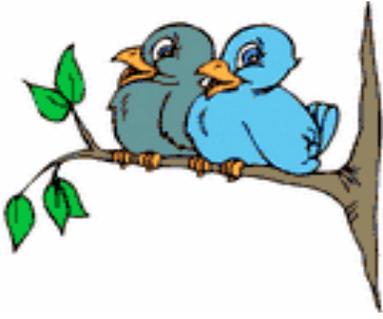
We have the pattern, now we just need some help cutting and assembling the boxes. Do you know of someone?

If you can assist us please call Ken Mackintosh or Joe Michielson and we will arrange to get supplies out to you. Please pass the word on to anyone that might be able to assist our cause.

Remember!

It's for the birds!





Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

Volume Nine ~ Fall 2009

Editor: G Tietz



“Mr. Dave Friebel”

It is with great sadness that I have to convey that Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society has lost yet *another long time member*. Dave Friebel was the primary bluebird box builder for many years. I for one have many of his boxes on my trails, his legacy is among us. Dave was also the main canvasser for donations of materials for the many boxes out on the countless trails in southern Alberta. Dave will be missed by us all.

It never seems to amaze me at the amount of dedication that a “bluebirder” has. I am positive that from spring to late fall there is an army of volunteers out there that continue to clean out the infamous Friebel boxes. I might suggest that each of us should take just a moment next time you clean out a box to remember such a wonderful giving person that assisted MBT with the ongoing efforts to help the bluebirds. I know I was grateful to know Dave and his lovely wife Marjorie.

And to Dave’s family... I will speak for the entire group as all of us would like thank Dave for every moment he spent cutting, assembling and painting our boxes. All of MBT wishes to convey our sincere regrets to your loss of such a dear person. Dave has indeed left a timeless legacy in southern Alberta. Be very proud of him, he was a very special person indeed. Our thoughts go out to the Friebel family at this time.

Very sincerely, Gwen Tietz
MBT Director



“Annual General Meeting” Saturday, Oct 31, 2009

2:00 p.m.

Nature Centre

(river bottom)

Lethbridge, AB

(snackies & refreshments)

Guest Speaker:

Reg Ernst

Rattlers!

RSVP:

345-4777 Joe

345-5806 Ken



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hard to believe another nesting season has passed. I received varying reports from our blue-birders regarding the nesting success and numbers. Personally on my trail I had fewer bluebird nests, many swallow and more wren nests. I did however come across a major surprise – 9 eggs in one box. MBT society will be hosting a conference next spring, so several of the members are busy planning and organizing for the event which will be held on May 28 and 29th, 2010.

The cool, or should I say cold, spring may have been a major factor for the bluebird selection of nesting location. When I did my first check of the boxes last spring, I didn't see a lot of ground insects. It seemed the some swallows and wrens nested early while the bluebirds were generally late, with some exceptions. In my area along the Oldman River, north of Coaldale, there was very little adverse weather after the birds hatched so I had successful nests just not very many bluebird broods



I do have bragging rights in one box. I had nine eggs that all hatched and the nestlings all fledged. I do believe the eggs were from 2 females because five eggs were larger and a deeper blue than the other 4. I did check the band on one female on my first visit to the box but, after checking her, I didn't check at other visits to see if a different female was on the nest. The photos I took of the parents raising the brood show a banded female.

I did get out after the nesting season to clean all my boxes so they'll be ready for the return next spring. I suspect I'll need to be ahead of the game because some of my time will be needed to help with the MBT Conference - [Views From the Box: 30 Years of Stewardship with MBTS](#). Check out the website that Brian Coffey put together for us - <http://lethbridgelink.com> and search mountain bluebird trails for updates and contact information on the conference.

Thank you to all the volunteers that offered to help with our conference. If you'd like to be part of the organizing committee or help during the event please let me know.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all at our AGM on [October 31](#). We had to change the venue because the Fish and Game Hall was booked, but the Helen Schuler Nature Center will work well for the meeting. We should be able to update you on the conference and we'll have a couple of interesting guest speakers.

Sincerely, Joe Michielson

Volunteers Desperately Needed!

The following MBT volunteer positions need to be filled right away:

Newsletter editor

Newsletter writers

Group presenters/facilitators

Trail Manager/documentations

Affiliates liaison

General membership liaison

Media liaison

MBT Historian

Funds Canvasser

2010 Workshop Committee Members Needed:

Registration Coordinator

Programs/Presenters Coordinator

Communications/Advertising

Walks/Tours Coordinator

Food/Lunch Coordinator

Please call to help us out:

Joe 345-4777 or Ken 345-5806



George Loades Tribute

by Don Stiles – Calgary Bluebird Society
(Memorial service of Sept. 28, 2009)

My tribute to George Loades this afternoon is on behalf of the Calgary Area Bluebird Trail Monitors where he played a key role. Each year for many years he built and gave away 300 nest boxes to our monitors, and most of the more than 50 trails in the Calgary area will have George's nest boxes on them. He monitored over 400 nest boxes, the largest number in our club, and banded large numbers of bluebirds and tree swallows every year. He was passionate about bluebirds and had about twice the energy of most of us so he got a lot done.

Monitoring - Now a few notes about the history of George as a bluebird trail monitor. He began in 1985 in a small way when he put out 34 nest boxes in the Jumping Pound area with his father Curly Loades. In 1986 he had 102 boxes in the Jumping Pound area and put out 28 boxes in the Priddis area. In 1987 his totals were 222 boxes in both areas and by 1990 he had over 300 nest boxes on the two trails which he has monitored every year up to now. This year he was able to monitor his bluebird trail, now over 400 boxes, up until about July 31 when his illness became more severe, so he only missed banding his late tree swallows. He has recorded fledging an average of nearly 800 bluebirds and over 1400 tree swallows each year recently.

Banding - Most years he banded his adult female bluebirds and tree swallows and the young in the nest boxes as they reached the banding stage at about 10 days of age. In 2001, he banded his 10,000th bluebird and in 2006 he banded his 10,000th tree swallow. He has had some significant recoveries of his banded birds. One of his tree swallows was recaptured in Northern California, whereas other Calgary area banded tree swallows were recovered in Louisiana or East Texas. He had one of his bluebirds caught by a cat near Kalispell, MT one spring when it was on its way up here. One of his tree swallows was 9 years old, only the third time this has happened.

Conferences - George was a natural ambassador for bluebirds. He and Ann often went to bluebird conferences put on by the North American Bluebird Society. There he was able to represent our group and encourage fellow bluebirders all across the continent. They went to such places as Athens, GA, San Antonio, TX, Kearney, NE (twice, one time they drove through a snow storm to get there), and Great Falls, MT. And this list is probably not complete.

We will miss George's enthusiasm at our annual meeting coming up on October 17. And especially, our monitors will miss the 300 boxes he made each year. He mentioned the last time I saw him about two weeks ago that he had the 300 nest boxes made for 2010, but they weren't painted yet. We will pick them up soon.

Thanks again George.



2009 Comes to a Close, take a moment to ponder the outcome...

Have a really close look at the detailed statistics below, as I began to filter through the banding worksheets and annual summaries as they came in I must admit I was a little afraid of the final outcome this year. Not so, there are a few really good items to ponder on this year.

Boxes Available (reported on): Yeah! **RECORD** number of monitors on the trails now! With the introduction of the workshop, training and mentors we have enlisted an amazing number of "newbies" to MBT! (I know that 4 people missed the newsletter with their summary report, the number could still be higher.)

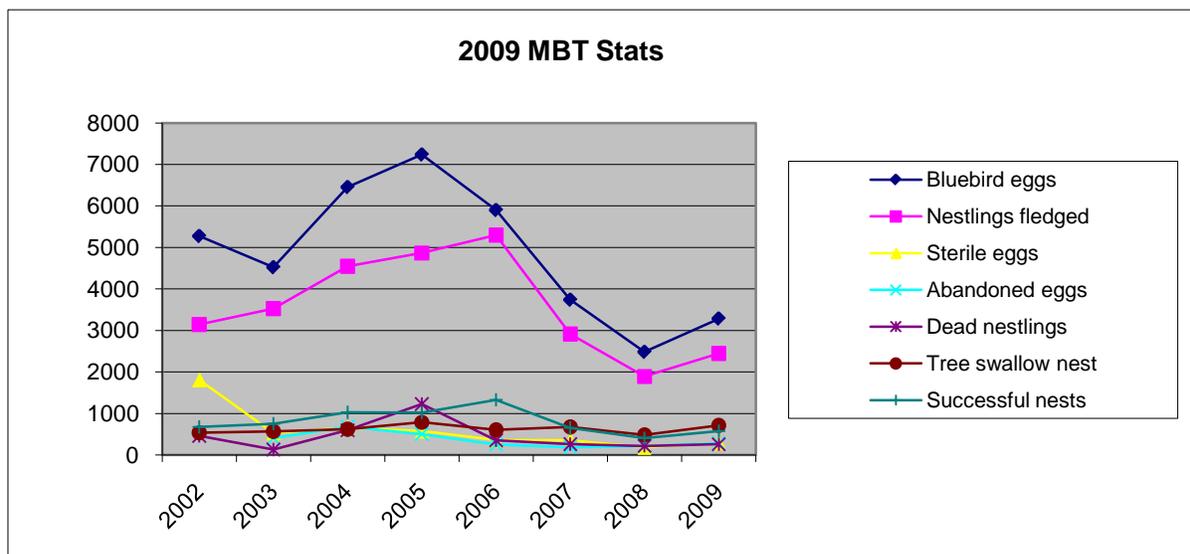
Successful nest vs eggs: I had several monitors &/or banders say this was the worst year ever for them, so why a marked stability despite the lousy weather events? I was expecting many more sterile and abandoned eggs as well as dead nestlings. Surprisingly, the record numbers of dead nestlings were in the Medicine Hat area, they had a nasty storm that virtually wiped their population back this spring.

Banding of adults and nestlings: The same number of banders are out there actually banding bluebirds regularly on select trails. It is the dream of the MBT board to get many of the new monitors up to banding on trails that were previously banded on, in time that will happen. Please, more mentors and trainers are needed to get us there!

Tree Swallow Nests: Wow! What an increase! On one of my trails I noticed an increase of swallow nesting attempts in previously empty boxes this year. Good for the tree swallows as last year was a dismal one for that species.

Detailed Statistics 2004 to 2009

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Boxes available	2062	2162	1907	1629	1164	1710
Successful nests	1026	1024	1331	655	405	578
Bluebird eggs	6453	7237	5900	3739	2483	3286
Sterile eggs	660	579	363	352	187	296
Abandoned eggs	684	503	241	189	213	284
Dead nestlings	596	1230	352	264	219	259
Nestlings fledged	4545	4866	5296	2914	1891	2447
Adults banded	106	154	77	92	54	52
Nestlings banded	2701	2583	3149	1663	1151	969
Recoveries	96	103	77	45	32	28
Tree swallow nests	623	788	609	675	482	716
Wren nests	18	49	22	29	41	82
Sparrow nests	36	39	63	54	29	16
Stolen/vandalized	57	52	27	140	10	7
Used twice	302	428	306	216	171	282





Thank You!
MBT success is due to each of you!

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Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Z1

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<u>Vice President:</u>	Fred Wishneski
<u>Treasurer:</u>	Jan Warren
<u>Secretary:</u>	Eleanor Thomson
<u>Directors:</u>	Ken Mackintosh 345-5806 Lynn Bell Gwen Tietz

Master Permit/
Band Manager Stats: Gwen Tietz 553-2780
Email: mtnblue@telus.net

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