

Bluebird Box Monitoring Effort 2018 Cove Point LNG, Calvert County, Maryland

In 2001 Arlene and Doug Ripley were monitoring Cove Point for TNC. Their suggestion of establishing a bluebird box trail was accepted and implemented with the assistance of the owners of Cove Point LNG. The Ripleys continued this activity until they moved to Arizona in 2007. In 2010 monitoring of these boxes was re-established by Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust. Thanks to the assistance of the security staff, weekly access to these boxes has been established throughout the nesting season.

The bluebird trail for 2018 at Cove Point began the year with thirteen boxes. Two of these are within the industrial area. Box 35 is situated in the rip rap sized rocks near gate 6 and early in the year stinging insects created a nest under the predator guard. During the season no avian activity was ever observed at Box 35. Box 37 is located on the gravel parking area next to gate 8. The other eleven boxes are located around lakes Levy and Osborne.



Lake Osborne with wood duck box.

Weather continued to be a major factor in the success or lack thereof in the nesting season. 2018 ended up being the wettest year on record in Maryland.

Another factor is competition for nesting sites. In 2017 we had issues in multiple boxes with attempts by wasp to nest. This year this was confined to Box 32. Strangely this coincided with a small number of lady bird beetles which also appeared in Box 30 and 31. The wasps persisted in Box 32 from the first visit on April 6th and for the next four visits in April. On May 21st three dead bumble bees were found in the box. No nesting activities by any avian species occurred in Box 32 during the entire season.



Box 22 and 32 were new boxes. Box 22 had a successful hatch. Box 32 only hosted insects.

The other more successful competitors were birds. While tufted titmouse and Carolina chickadee periodically made nesting attempts in the boxes, tree swallows are the most successful. On a bright note, there continues to be no evidence of house sparrows in any of the locations.

Nesting activity this year began on the first visit (April 6th) with four bluebird eggs in Box 23. The next action was two weeks later (April 20th) with five eggs in Box 22 and Box 28. The final April nesting event happened on the 27th with the only action in the industrial area with five bluebird eggs in Box 35. These broods were successfully fledged on May 21st, May 30th, and June 6th.



In May other species began their attempts at nesting. On May 4th a dead tree swallow was found in Box 29. That day a tufted titmouse took up residence in Box 27, laying five eggs. The next week (May 11th) Box 26 and Box 30 each had a tree swallow nest with 5 eggs. On May 21st Box 29 had a tree swallow nest with four eggs. On the same day a nest with no eggs was found in Box 24. The next week one egg was laid and the week after another three appeared. Four of the five titmouse eggs hatched and had fledged by June 14th. Box 26's babies all fledged on June 6th. Those from Box 30 were a week later on June 14th. The last two broods of trees wallows fledged on May 28th. All four from Box 29 and three of the four from Box 24 survived.



Titmouse eggs



. Tree swallow eggs

In June there were two more bluebird nests. Box 28 (the only repeat use of a box) had four eggs on June 21st. The same day Box 25 saw a nest which also had four eggs. Both fledged by July 27th.

No further activity occurred and the last visit was taken on August 6th.

Birds of Cove Point (winter migrant*)

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Chipping Sparrow | Field Sparrow | Song Sparrow | Northern Junco* |
| White-throated Sparrow* | Northern Cardinal | Eastern Towhee | Indigo Bunting |
| Blue Grosbeak | American Goldfinch | House Finch | Tree Swallow |
| Barn Swallow | Eastern Pewee | Great-crested Flycatcher | Acadian Flycatcher |
| Red-eyed Vireo | White-eyed Vireo | Yellow-throated Vireo | Blue Jay |
| Fish Crow | American Crow | Turkey Vulture | Black Vulture |
| Bald Eagle | Red-shouldered Hawk | Red-tailed Hawk | Osprey |
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo | Scarlet Tanager | Summer Tanager | Orchard Oriole |
| Mallard | Canada Goose | Pied-billed Grebe* | Green-winged Teal* |
| Lesser Scaup* | Ring-billed Duck* | Great Blue Heron | Spotted Sandpiper |
| Herring Gull | Ring-billed Gull | Laughing Gull | Tufted Titmouse |
| Carolina Chickadee | Carolina Wren | Belted Kingfisher | Downy Woodpecker |
| Northern Flicker | Pileated Woodpecker | Red-bellied Woodpecker | Wild Turkey |

Cove Point Species along the beach and marsh available in separate document.

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Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust