

Bluebird Box Monitoring Effort 2020-2021 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 2021 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. Box 37 is located on the gravel parking area next to gate 8. The other eleven boxes are located around lakes Levy and Osborne.

But first a note about 2020. In mid-March 2020, Maryland and most of the United States went on lock down due to the announced pandemic. Access to many businesses was limited and non-essential personnel were not allowed on board the Cove Point LNG facility. Consequently, no monitoring or fall clean out of the boxes occurred.

This made for an interesting first visit to Cove Point on April 6, 2021. The first box (37) opened revealed the possible successful use(s) by bluebirds with at least one nest materials intact. All but three of the other twelve boxes had similar stories. The nesting material was removed and the boxes swept out. Two boxes 24 and 29 need to be replaced. Box 25, 31, and 32 all experienced issues with insects. Mud dabbers filled most of the box 31 with their tubular construction. Boxes 25 and 31 had wasps' nest. The Peterson box (30) had a nest with the skeletal remains of a bird. All of these boxes were also cleared out.

As a footnote to these observations, as in 2019 there were no signs of tree swallows noted at either lake. The nesting material did not have the messy goose feathery aspect that marks their nests at this site.

2021 was the without doubt the worse year for monitoring bluebirds at Cove Point in my experience.

- Two dead tree swallows found in box 26 over a three-week period.
- Two nests abandoned with eggs in them.
- Two nests built but never used.
- Complete predation of the one successful tree swallow nest.

There were eleven attempts to nest or which nine were successful and produced young. They included one house wren, two tree swallows, and only eight bluebird nests. Of the thirty-one bluebird eggs, only twenty fledged. Tree swallows were even worse with one complete failure and five of ten eggs hatching.

Bluebird Box Monitoring Effort 2020-2021 Turner Road, Lusby Calvert County, Maryland

When Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust purchased property on Turner Road, we were asked to take over the bluebird trail located there. A total of eleven boxes were available to be monitored. Protection from predation is minimal and this proved to be an issue latter in the year.

The property is agricultural fields and roadside. Doves, meadowlarks, tree swallows, and horned larks are some of the neighbors. Bluebirds, tree swallow, house wren, and chickadee made nests. The chickadee laid seven eggs which all fledged. The house wren used the same box, but it's five eggs were predated. The only tree swallow nest had six eggs all of which fledged.

Twenty-two of the twenty-five attempts were bluebirds. They laid seventy-three eggs of which fifty-nine fledged. Two boxes saw a total of fourteen eggs predated.

The season was early here with eggs found on April 6. And the latest hatch was August 19.

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