

## Bluebird Trails Monitoring Report 2023

The nesting box season started early again this year. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, five of ten boxes on Turner Road had a nest in them. At Cove Point the next day four of thirteen had a nest and one had two eggs.

It also ended late. The Cove Point site had four active nests in July. The last of these fledged in early August. At Turner Road the end of July saw eight of ten boxes still active. By August three still had young in the box. It was the second week in August before they fledged.

### Cove Point

One of the surprises for 2023 was the problems with box 26 by Lake Levy. It is in an open area on a hill (earthen dam) up from the water. Bluebirds and tree swallows often vie for this box. But last year we found a dead bird in the box. And this year within two weeks I found two different dead tree swallows. The box was covered in guano. Could it be that ammonia fumes were to blame? I could see no physical damage to either of the dead birds. To be cautious I removed the box.

We had a case of predation in box 25. After a successful brood in of four that fledged in mid-May, a new nest was established at the end of the month. The next week it had four eggs. The week after it had none. This nest had a very attentive bird. I never caught it in the box, but it was always in the vicinity. When I opened the box, it would dive and snap at me. This behavior was consistent. But something had got to this nest and with the baffle in place I wasn't sure who the predator was.

Box 23, which is close to box 25 had a brood of chickadees a little later than their neighbors. After they fledged and the nest was removed it became available. The next week there was some nesting material in the box. A week after that box 23 has a complete nest and snappy bird has returned. By the end of June there were four eggs and these fledged by the end of July. Most likely both bluebird broods came from the same parents.

Box 37 outside Gate 6 had one brood of five chickadees. Box 22 had a chickadee nest but never saw any eggs laid. Box 28 also had a nest which never saw any eggs. I removed it and a new nest was built the next week. This time four young were produced. Box 29 had a successful hatch of 5 eggs, but one didn't make it to fledgling status.

When July arrived, activity slowed down with only four boxes showing activity.

## Turner Road

April had a good start with every box except number two having nesting activity. By the end of the month two broods produced eight young. In early May another twenty-four had hatched. By mid-May a tree swallow tried to take up residence in box two. After three weeks of seeing the bird near the box, on week four there were eggs. And they belonged to a bluebird. What happened? I am not sure, but it looks like an eviction. Although there were always a lot of tree swallows around the trail, this was the only nesting attempt using these boxes. Past seasons have seen tree swallows and chickadees using the nesting boxes. This year bluebirds ruled.



Only one box had a single nesting attempt (box 2). Seven had two attempts. And two had three attempts. Four eggs were the most common production. A total of twenty nests were built, producing eighty-nine eggs and eighty-six fledged birds. The last eggs were laid July 21<sup>st</sup> and fledged by August 12<sup>th</sup>.