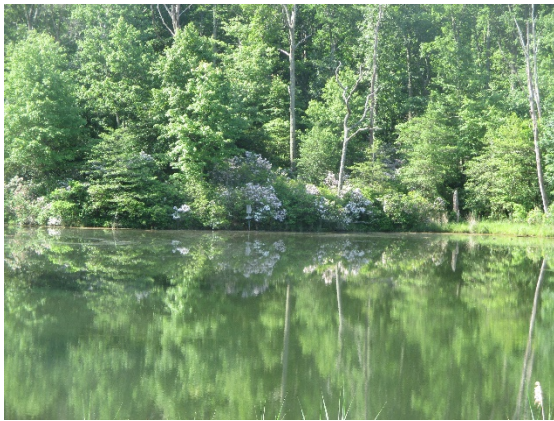


Bluebird Box Monitoring Effort 2019 Cove Point LNG, Calvert County, Maryland

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 2019 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. During the season there was no nesting activity in either box. The other eleven boxes are located around lakes Levy and Osborne.



Lake Levy



Box 26

This year's monitoring began on April 4th. The wet weather did not seem to be a factor as it was in 2018. The first active nesting attempts did start a little later than normal with the first eggs being observed in two boxes on April 18th. Extreme hot weather did occur for a few weeks but did not seem to have an impact on the season.

Of the eleven boxes behind gate six, four saw no nesting activity at all (Boxes 25, 29, 30, and 31). Of the other seven, five had bluebird nests built in them and all but one had a successful hatch. On May 15th Box 22 was taken over by a very protective Carolina chickadee. She never left the nest when I rapped on the box to let her know I was going to open the box. The first time she flew out I almost fell over from surprise. During the active raising of her brood, never once did she go further than the closest tree when I dared to open her house. She was a very vocal and very protective mother successfully fledging all six of her eggs.



Mama chickadee guarding her house.



The babies waiting for me to leave and mama to return.

On May 15th Box 32 had a nest and eggs that at first, I did not recognize. The way the cavity twisted it was hard to see the eggs and then the hatchling. This mystery bird ended up being our first house wren and she raised a brood of six as well.



House wren young and eggs.



Summer tanager near Box 32.

One other change from previous years also became apparent after the third visit. The lakes which had always had a lot of tree swallows swooping around catching insects was quiet on that front. In past years there were multiple tree swallow nesting attempts at two or more boxes. This year it was July before I even saw a tree swallow at the Lake Levy. It was the only swallow sighting I had that summer at the Cove Point terminal.

Meanwhile the bluebird action was a bit slow as well. The April 18th nesting action in boxes 23 and 27 both produced five hatchlings. Box 27 had a second brood of four started on July 23rd. These were the latest birds I have even had fledged at Cove Point being out of the nest on August 10th. The other box

which produced two broods was Box 24. On May 5th five eggs were laid and on June 21st another group of four were found.

On June 7th, the unsuccessful bluebird nesting attempt was begun in Box 26 next to Lake Levy. Four eggs were laid, but a wind storm blew the top off and the nest was abandoned. Box 28 had a single brood of four with the eggs being found on June 14th.



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.

Bob Boxwell, Business Manager
Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust