

Bluebird Box Monitoring Effort 2013 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 summer.



The bluebird trail at Cove Point consists of fourteen boxes. Three 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. Box 36 is located by a block-lined "pool" which periodically holds water. None of these locations are particularly attractive habitat, but all had nesting activity over the season. The other eleven boxes were located around lakes Levy and Osborne.

The initial visit to the trail at Cove Point for 2013 was done on April 4. Boxes were inspected for structural integrity and to see if the nesting season had begun. Spring was rainy season this year so it was good that the repairs done to the roofs in 2012 held up over the winter. Box 36 the only active box needed a new front piece. A temporary repair allowed this box to remain productive throughout the season. Inspections also showed no evidence of insect or other inhabitation.

An impressive element in these years of effort has been the lack of house sparrows and other predators. The one box that



has had possible predation in the past has been Box 32. Located on the back end of Lake Osborn In a field, in the three years of monitoring no nesting activity has been seen. Indeed a dead bird was found in the box in consecutive years (2011 and 2012). This year a bumblebee was our casualty. Much better news was this box finally seeing some nesting activity in July and August. Four bluebirds fledged and this box produced young for the first time in four years.

This year two species utilized the boxes, Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebird. No chickadee rentals at all this year. Every box on the route hatched at least one brood this year. Box 36 by gate 10 was the earliest and it was the only box to produce three broods. Three boxes (24, 28, and 35) produced two broods. And two others



(23 and 31) had one unsuccessful and one successful nesting attempt. All of the multi-broods boxes attempts were made by bluebirds.



The three successful multiples all showed activity by the second visit on April 15. Of the two unsuccessful multiples Box 23 had a complete nest for four weeks with no eggs before it was removed. Two weeks later the nest was rebuilt and two eggs were laid. Box 31 had an initial successful nesting and built a second nest by July 16. Three weeks later the nest was still empty and removed.

The two boxes that saw Tree Swallow activity in 2012 were again occupied. Last year box 26 had two broods totally eight birds. This year only one brood was raised. Both boxes had nesting building going on in April and eggs in early May. Keeping track of these is not that easy with a mound of fluffy goose down hiding and camouflaging the eggs. By June the young had fledged and with six babies each.

During the season there were nineteen attempts at nesting by Eastern Bluebirds. Seventeen broods successfully hatched. A total of eighty-two babies were fledged. In addition two broods of Tree Swallows totaling twelve young also made it out of the box and into the air. On the last day of monitoring, August 8 all boxes were empty of birds.



Birds of Cove Point's Nesting Season

Chipping Sparrow	Field 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	Great Blue Heron	Spotted Sandpiper	Herring Gull
Ring-billed Gull	Laughing Gull	Tufted Titmouse	Carolina Chickadee
Carolina Wren	Belted Kingfisher	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Flicker
Hairy Woodpecker	Pileated Woodpecker	Red-bellied Woodpecker	

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