

Bluebird Box Monitoring Effort 2014 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.



Box 31 in the rear of Lake Levy.



Hard to call these hatchlings cute.

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 these boxes included three of the four with two or more successful nests. The other eleven boxes are located around lakes Levy and Osborne.



Lake Levy

The initial visit to the trail at Cove Point for 2014 was done on April 4. Boxes were inspected for structural integrity and to see if the nesting season had begun. The arrival of spring proved a bumpy ride with several thaws followed by snow and ice. 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.

There continues to be no evidence of house sparrows but other predation occurred this year. Surprisingly the one box that has had predation in the past has Box 32 showed no such activity this year. In fact it showed no activity and was removed to replace the damage box at location 36. Placed on the back end of Lake Osborn In a field, in the four years of monitoring only one nesting attempt has occurred. Upon relocation a new brood quickly occupied the old box at its new location.

This year two species utilized the boxes, Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebird. Chickadees were shut out for the second year in a row. Every location on the route except box 32 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.

This was the first bluebird nest in the recent period of monitoring to have six eggs.



The second attempt also produced six eggs.

In both cases only five of the eggs hatched.



The third brood saw all four eggs successfully fledge.

Five other boxes produced more than one brood. These multiples included three bluebirds and three tree swallows. Box 37 by gate 6 produced two successful broods of bluebirds but only four eggs each. While we have had four egg broods in the past they are usually the last brood of the season. And box 35 had a brood of five and one of four. Interestingly the three boxes in which bluebirds had multiple broods were all within the industrial area. Other bluebird nest attempts included a single brood of four in box 24. Single broods of five young in boxes 22, 23, 28, and 31. While box 25 had five eggs but only four hatched. And box 29 had six eggs with only five hatching.

All three tree swallow nests had multiple broods. Five of the broods hatched and four fledged successfully. Tree swallows make a rather untidy nest full of feathers and it is difficult to easily see birds



or eggs. The Peterson box (30) has had chickadees and bluebirds in the past and this year the tree swallows made their bid. This nesting attempt started with a partial nest on April 14. A month later we finally see eggs and by June 3 five birds have hatched. Unfortunately the nest was infested with ants. Attempts to dislodge them were not ultimately successful and a week later the empty nest was removed and an ant trap placed on the box. The ants cleared out and a second nesting attempt resulted in four eggs by July 11. This nest was abandoned after July 25th although there was no return of the ants.

Box 26 on the dam face of Lake Levy and box 27 at the end of Lake Levy had the other nesting tree swallows. Box 26 produced two broods of four each. While the box on the hill produced two broods of five each. These nests did not experience any issues with ants.

Nesting season started slowly peaking in June and early July. During the four and a half month season there were fourteen attempts at nesting by Eastern Bluebirds, all successful. Of sixty-eight eggs laid sixty-four babies were fledged. In addition four of six broods of Tree Swallows were successful, totaling twenty-eight eggs and nineteen young. The last day of monitoring was August 15

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.

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December 5, 2014