

2015 BLUEBIRD NESTBOX SURVEY RESULTS

Thirteen (13) nestbox survey reports were received for the 2015 breeding season. The number of nestboxes monitored was 165, representing ten counties. Table (1) provides a ten year comparison (2005-2015) of survey results. Please note that the comparison focuses primarily on Eastern Bluebird breeding activities.

The following species attempted nesting in nestboxes: **Eastern Bluebird (171), Bewick's Wren (10), Carolina Chickadee (7), Tufted Titmouse (3), Carolina Wren (4), House Wren (1), and House Sparrow (57)**. In 2015, the House Sparrow was again an unwelcome species on the list as noted by the 57 nesting attempts reported. However, only 3 fledged out of the 57 nesting attempts! This demonstrates how continual monitoring helps to alleviate competition from these non-native species. Congratulations!

As in previous years, not all nesting attempts were monitored throughout the breeding season, and therefore, the number of eggs laid, hatched, and young fledged represent the minimums for the Eastern Bluebird. Monitors reported at least **614 Eastern Bluebirds** fledged from **159 clutches**. Figure (1) is a map of Oklahoma showing bluebird data by county for the 2015 breeding season. Included are the number of monitored nestboxes and the number of fledgling bluebirds reported by county.

The data, based on submitted reports, reflects the Eastern Bluebird breeding success rate of **3.9** fledged per clutch for 2015, which is well above the 10-year average of fledged/clutch for the Oklahoma Bluebird Nestbox Survey (3.32). This is good news!

The total number of fledged bluebirds reported to the Oklahoma Bluebird Nestbox survey since 1985: 62,653

TABLE 1. Ten year comparison of breeding success reported for Eastern Bluebirds using monitored nestboxes.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Counties Reporting	28	21	15	19	18	12	9	9	11	12	10
Reports Submitted	71	48	31	39	35	25	13	12	15	19	13
Species Using nestboxes	12	10	12	13	9	10	7	6	8	8	7
# Nestboxes Monitored	973	744	545	628	566	471	284	268	286	408	165
Nesting Attempts	734	754	386	467	483	318	223	191	189	260	171
Clutches	736	715	367	434	419	286	213	176	176	248	159
# Eggs	3309	3253	1653	1885	1892	1321	929	771	730	1111	762
Eggs/Clutch	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.5	4.8
# Chicks	2708	2519	1203	1609	1409	1017	688	597	561	903	649
Chick/Clutch	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.7	3.4	3.6	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.6	4.1
Chicks/Eggs	82%	77%	73%	85%	74%	77%	74%	77%	77%	81%	85%
# Fledged	2551	2317	1133	1530	1406	963	658	560	469	867	614
Fledged/Clutch	3.5	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.2	2.6	3.5	3.9
Fledged/Eggs	77%	71%	68%	81%	74%	73%	71%	72%	64%	78%	81%
Fledged/Hatched	94%	92%	94%	95%	99%	95%	96%	94%	74%	96%	94%

COMMENTS

Following are the comments provided by the nestbox participants. Thank you so much for taking the time to provide some thoughts, ideas, and concerns:

- First attempt began April 8 and was unsuccessful! Second attempt begun June 21 and fledged 5! (McCurtain County)

- I've keep all my records for each year since we started our BB Trail in 1987.

Totals for 29 years:

Eggs Laid – 3,378

Eggs Hatched – 2,614

Fledglings – 2,390!

(Beckham County)

- We didn't have as many 3rd nesting attempts as usual and the nesting season on our trail ended sooner than normal. As a rule, we have several fledglings in August but this year's nesting season was over with the July fledglings. (Beckham County)

-House sparrows and European starlings did not appear this year! (Osage County)

-Best year ever, with exception of losing 2 clutches due to rain. Total Bluebirds fledged since 2000 – 844!!! (Beckham County)

-Screws placed in side of box so raccoons can't open boxes, replacing plastic latches. Two bull snakes exterminated that were getting in boxes. Sparrows are a problem keeping them out of the boxes. Grandkids love to help check the boxes once a week. 4-year old granddaughter advises everyone that she is a citizen scientist for the ODWC. (Pottawatomie County)

-Tough year for bluebirds based on our bluebird trail experiences this year as compared with several past years. We had very low hatching rates from the first round of eggs (~10%). During the first round we had cool temperatures, persistent rain and overcast conditions. Our second round of egg-laying yielded ~ 80% hatching rate. Temperatures were moderate with little rain during the time period. Unfortunately this weather period did not hold and high temperatures set in quickly and during the third round of egg-laying very few bluebird eggs hatched and none of the chickadee eggs hatched that we observed. During August three of our empty bluebird boxes were used regularly by treefrogs. (Payne County)



-Although I'd hoped to get more eggs than I did, I can say that I'm pleased with the progress we've made. I'm excited for 2016 and hope we can continue to increase the number of fledglings. (Tulsa County)

- Had a very good season this year! (Okmulgee County)

-We had a great year. The best part of the year was that my 5-year old granddaughter was my secretary. She wrote down the information at each box in our log book as we checked the houses. With 43 boxes to check it speeds up the process. She has been helping me for the last 3 years. It is really neat when a young person exhibits such an interest in nature and bluebirds. She knows more about bluebirds than most adults. (Osage County)

2016 UPDATE

As you know, the Wildlife Diversity Program has been requesting information from those who monitor bluebird nestboxes since 1985. Through this citizen science effort, the Wildlife Diversity Program uses the information to better understand the use of nestboxes by cavity nesters and to provide a "peek" into the breeding activities of these birds. The survey also provides a platform for participants to share experiences; some inspiring, some heartbreaking.

The chart below shows the number of reports submitted and the number of nestboxes monitored every 5 years since 1985. It is the hope of the Wildlife Diversity Program that through news releases, the monthly e-newsletter, *The Wild Side*, social media, and you that more Oklahomans will become citizen scientists for the Eastern Bluebird. Help spread the word! Please see the attached news release from Jena Donnell, Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist, about Anne Freeman, a citizen scientist for the Eastern Bluebird for 29 years! I know that many of you have shared your bluebird monitoring with children and grandchildren and we thank you so much for inspiring the young ones!

Year	# of Reports	# of nestboxes
1985	19	290
1990	130	1656
1995	57	966
2000	47	871
2005	71	973
2010	25	471
2015	13	165

We would very much like for you to use the updated form to submit your 2016 results. Form is available online at: http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlifemgmt/citizen_science.htm
You can attach the completed form to an email to Melynda.hickman@odwc.ok.gov or you can submit your data online at the same link listed above.

Please use this form to record the results of your bluebird nestbox monitoring **and discard any older forms you may have.**

Annual reports are posted on the OK Dept. of Wildlife Conservation's website under "Citizen Science" as well as a summary is provided through the monthly e-newsletter, *The Wild Side*. If you have not subscribed to this free newsletter you may do so at:

<http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlifemgmt/wildside.htm>

One really great resource online for information on bluebird nestbox monitoring is www.sialis.org. It is all about bluebirds and there is even a pictorial representation of the different ages of the chicks in the nest. I think you will enjoy the website.

THANK YOU ONE AND ALL!

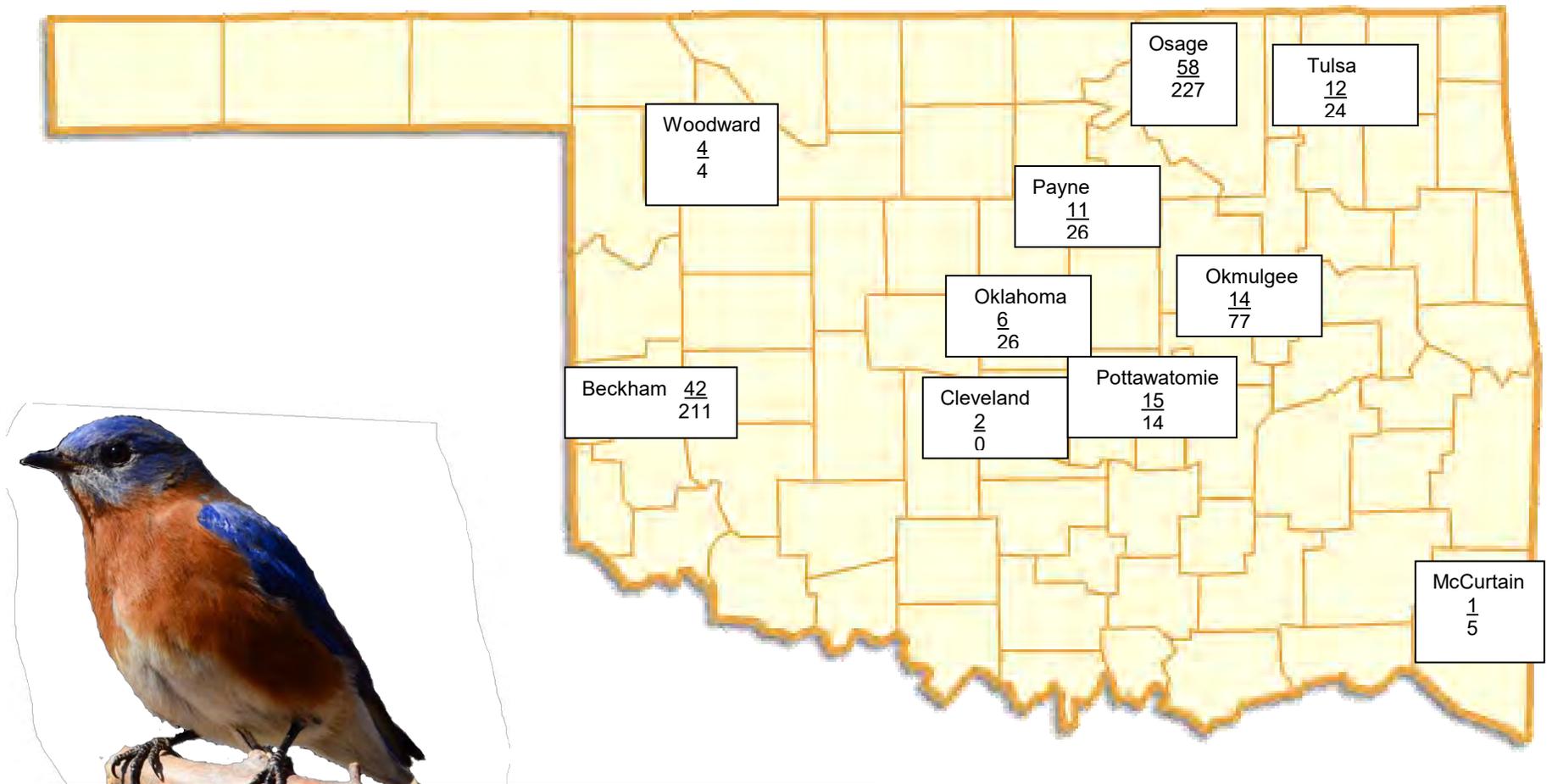


Figure 1. **2015 Bluebird Nesting Results**

The top number is the number of nestboxes monitored;

Bottom number is the number of bluebirds fledged