

2005 OKLAHOMA BLUEBIRD NEST BOX RESULTS

The Oklahoma Nestbox Trails Project was initiated in 1985 to enhance habitat for cavity-nesting birds in Oklahoma and reverse the population decline noted for the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). The project depends entirely upon volunteers to place the boxes in suitable habitat, monitor usage, control competition from House Sparrows, alleviate predation problems and report the nesting season's results. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Wildlife Diversity Program would like to especially give credit to those trail reporters who take the time and have the dedication to establish extensive trails and report on them.

The Wildlife Diversity Program would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the **Oklahoma Bluebird Society** (OBS) for promoting bluebird conservation in Oklahoma. Twenty-two percent (16) of the bluebird nestbox reports we received for the 20045 breeding season listed they were affiliated with OBS. If you wish to learn more about your bluebirds please consider joining this important conservation organization. They have already made a significant contribution to conservation by encouraging trail monitors to provide us with their data. The database of the Oklahoma Nestbox Trail Project provides a "window" into the conservation of cavity-nesters- particularly bluebirds- in Oklahoma. Membership includes receiving their excellent newsletter, *The Hole Story*, which provides good information about monitoring bluebird nesting activities and habitat enhancement. Heart-warming stories and poems provided by members will offer inspiration! A membership form is included in your packet.

The Wildlife Diversity Program would also like to acknowledge the conservation work from the Kerr-McGee's Mid-Continent area's employees. The employees constructed and installed 98 nestboxes on their facilities throughout northwest and western Oklahoma with great success as is reflected in the 2005 results. The employees are continuing their conservation work with the construction and installation of Wood Duck nestboxes and more bluebird nestboxes on public lands. Good job!

The staff of the Oklahoma Wildlife Diversity Program wishes to extend our sincerest "thank you" to all trail monitors who know the work, the joy and the frustrations of maintaining a bluebird trail. Thank you for helping bring back the Eastern Bluebird.

RESULTS

The number of nestbox trail reports received for the 2005 breeding season (71) reflected a significant increase from the 2004 (51). Accordingly, the number of nestboxes monitored increased (973) as compared to 2004 (767). Twenty-seven (27) counties are represented for the 2005 breeding season, a definite increase over the 21 counties in 2004. In addition, four new counties were represented for the first time in the Oklahoma Nestbox Project, the include Roger Mills, Harper, Beaver and Dewey counties. Table 1 provides a list of nestbox trail variables from 1995 to 2005.

The top four species in frequency of nesting attempts and occurrence on trails were the **Eastern Bluebird**, **House Sparrow**, **Carolina Chickadee**, and the **Tufted Titmouse**. Over **99%** of nestbox usage was by Eastern Bluebirds and this species was reported on **99%** of the trails.

Eleven (11) identified bird species were reported nesting in nestboxes including the first reported nesting of a Tree Swallow for Comanche County. Nesting attempts by year is provided in Table 2. In 2005, the House Sparrow and European Starling was again an unwelcome species on the list. However, absolutely no chicks fledged out of the combined 145 eggs reported! 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 species (Table 3). Monitors reported at least **2,708 Eastern Bluebirds** fledged from **736 clutches**. Figure 1 is a map of Oklahoma showing bluebird data by county for the 2005 breeding season. Included are the number of monitored nestboxes and the number of fledgling bluebirds reported by county.

The **total number of fledgling bluebirds reported** to the Oklahoma Nestbox Trails Project **since 1985:** **52,133!**

TABLE 1. NESTBOX TRAIL VARIABLES FROM 1995 TO 2005

| | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Total Trail Reports | 53 | 54 | 40 | 52 | 46 | 47 | 47 | 40 | 44 | 51 | 71 |
| Total Nestboxes | 1173 | 1108 | 1081 | 1142 | 963 | 871 | 797 | 750 | 780 | 767 | 973 |
| Average Trail Size | 17 | 18 | 27 | 22 | 20 | 18 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 15 | 14 |
| Number of Counties | 29 | 31 | 24 | 31 | 21 | 24 | 25 | 22 | 21 | 21 | 28 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Species | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Eastern Bluebird | 1072 | 1390 | 1075 | 879 | 686 | 690 | 664 | 654 | 734 |
| Carolina Chickadee | 59 | 53 | 36 | 47 | 49 | 39 | 40 | 59 | 92 |
| House Sparrow | 98 | 143 | 118 | 78 | 90 | 70 | 105 | 89 | 59 |
| Bewick's Wren | 33 | 19 | 8 | 13 | 6 | 11 | 16 | 17 | 20 |
| Carolina Wren | 14 | 22 | 6 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 9 | 7 |
| House Wren | 0 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Tufted Titmouse | 41 | 45 | 31 | 71 | 20 | 18 | 40 | 27 | 32 |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Great-crested Flycatcher | 3 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Tree Swallow | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Eastern Phoebe | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| House Finch | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Eastern Wood-Pewee | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| European Starling | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Ash-throated Flycatcher | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | | |



TABLE 2. NESTING ATTEMPTS BY YEAR

TABLE 3. NESTING SUCCESS BY SPECIES IN 2005

PC = per clutch

| Species | Clutches Monitored | Eggs Laid | | Eggs Hatched | | Young Fledged | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| | | Total | PC | Total | PC | Total | PC |
| Eastern Bluebird | 736 | 3309 | 4.5 | 2708 | 3.7 | 2551 | 3.5 |
| Carolina Chickadee | 80 | 433 | 5.4 | 305 | 3.8 | 254 | 3.2 |
| Tufted Titmouse | 32 | 183 | 5.7 | 146 | 4.6 | 118 | 3.7 |
| House Sparrow | 46 | 138 | 3 | 37 | 0.8 | 0 | 0 |
| Carolina Wren | 6 | 32 | 5.3 | 8 | 1.3 | 8 | 1.3 |
| Bewick's Wren | 19 | 115 | 6.1 | 84 | 4.4 | 82 | 4.3 |
| House Wren | 6 | 37 | 6.2 | 33 | 5.5 | 33 | 5.5 |
| Tree Swallow | 4 | 21 | 5.2 | 11 | 2.7 | 11 | 2.7 |
| Great-crested Flycatcher | 2 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| Ash-throated Flycatcher | 1 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| European Starling | 2 | 7 | 3.5 | 5 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 |
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COMMENTS

Following are the comments provided by the trail reporters. My apologies if your comment is not reflected below. If I could not interpret handwriting, I did not record your comment. Thank you so much for taking the time to provide some thoughts, ideas, and concerns:

- Tough year! Lots of construction/ dirt work on south campus OU. Several abandoned nests of young pairs due to cold weather and construction activity. (Cleveland)
- We lost 3 boxes on the bluebird trail this year due to construction work. (Cleveland)
- Shot 5 male and 1 female and 2 baby sparrows. Also 1 starling. Hate these birds – shoot at them year-round. (Comanche)
- A good bluebirding season with few problems. (Beckham)
- No sparrow invasions this year. I believe that some of the fledged birds became food for the Mississippi Kites. (Oklahoma)
- We did not see any bluebirds this year. This is the first time since we put up boxes up that we didn't have at least one hatch. We haven't any idea why. (Woodward)
- This is the first time I have ever had a tree swallow. (Cherokee)

- One of my boxes had a Tufted Titmouse nest built but Carolina Chickadees laid 7 eggs and fledged all 7. It took me a few days to figure out it was a Tufted Titmouse nest. Finally found picture on the internet. The woven small strips of tree bark. Wow. It was beautifully built. Sorry the chickadees muscled their way in. (Cleveland)
- Had a lot more bluebirds this year. Did have several really bad winds that caused damage to the houses and nests. Lost some wren eggs in these damaged nests. (Payne)
- Added 5 houses at the end of the season. No takers on the new houses yet. (Logan)
- Our attempts and clutches were exactly equal to last year's but egg production, young hatched, and young fledged were down 21%. (Payne)
- For the past 3 years I've had only 1 box, and one breeding pair of bluebirds that had 3 clutches each year. But this year right before breeding/nesting season started the female disappeared. It wasn't until June 12th that a pair started building a nest in that box. Then they only had one clutch. I put up a second box this year. The Tufted Titmouse found it first. After they fledged, a pair of bluebirds built their nest right on top of the titmouse nest. Only one bluebird clutch in second box. (Okmulgee)
- Bad year starting off, got better. (Logan)
- Had a pretty good year. (Beckham)
- Trapped and eliminated 63 house sparrows. (Wagoner)

NEW for 2006!

Starting March, 2006, participants in the Oklahoma Nestbox Program will be able to submit their data on-line. The downloadable form that existed on the agency's website will have a "new and improved" look. Thanks to one of our IT staff, Rodney Derrick, the form should be much easier to use and our participants can submit their data directly to our website. Of course we might have to work out some "kinks" but I believe you will enjoy having this option. I've also included a hard copy of the form for those who prefer to provide their information in the traditional way.

