

Carol Porter Bluebird Trail Results for 2015

The Carol Porter Bluebird Trail consists of 92 boxes primarily located along the Eagle Butte Road south of Medicine Hat but some boxes are also situated on side roads including Ranchville, Jackpot and Wildcat Roads. This trail has been continuously operated since 1989 with minor changes during the years to numbers and locations of boxes.



During the period April through August these boxes are visited and serviced weekly (three week rotational cycle) by a devoted group of volunteers. They service the boxes, affect any required repairs and count and record eggs and nestlings. After fledging they clean out the boxes as required to ready them for potential second broods or for the next year's breeding season. In 2015 this group of dedicated volunteers included:

- Peggy and Mike Hansen
- Lorraine and Randy Stotz
- Mel Bender
- Ann and Dennis Hall
- Ennyd and Cled Jones
- Phyllis and Ross Strobel
- Beth and Ted Turner
- Ric Carrier
- Carol and Brian Lowery
- Dee and Brent Cowan
- Jim and JoAnne MacFarlane
- Donna Steele and Sue Higgins

Many thanks to these dedicated volunteers and special thanks are extended to Ben Verner who keeps us supplied with replacement bluebird boxes.

2015 was a very successful year for Mountain Bluebirds. There were no killing spring snowstorms; this enabled the males to claim their respective boxes early with no interference from Tree Swallows. During the entire breeding season there were no major storms of any kind. In all 63 successful nests were tallied which is the most since 2006. In these nests a total of 417 eggs were counted with total birds fledged being 326: the most since 2005 and the second highest on record. Sterile and/or abandoned eggs were near the long term average. With the great weather and early first broods second broods produced 77 nestlings: an above average number.

In addition to Mountain Bluebirds the boxes are also used by Tree Swallows. In 2015, 239 Tree Swallows were fledged the lowest number since we started counting in 2010. A large number of nestlings died in the boxes (69) likely attributable to the extreme summer heat. Conversely the numbers of Bluebirds that died in the boxes (15) were about normal. The bluebirds fledge earlier thus avoiding the excessive heat although the second broods also had some mortalities. Perhaps Tree Swallow young are more susceptible to the heat.