

BLUEBIRDS

Generous donation

The Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society is a non-profit organization dependent on donations for its work. We were humbled and delighted this year to receive a most generous \$5,000 donation from the estate of Irene Matilda Clarke of Calgary. Her obituary reveals that she adored birds as well as being an avid dancer, gardener and bargain shopper. She is described as a caring, thoughtful and charitable person. Ms. Clarke passed away in March at the age of 89. Her generous gift will enable our society to continue its work in providing habitat for mountain bluebirds.



President's report

By Jim Leitch

As I reported in the spring newsletter this year, I find myself once again sitting in my backyard on a beautiful sunny fall afternoon and like then, I am distracted by the events that surround us. It has now been roughly seven months since the onslaught of this world-wide pandemic. Like everywhere, we as a bluebird society were not exempt from its impact, but I must say we made every effort to carry on and do the best we could.

Thank you again to all our monitors who faithfully monitored their boxes and reported their activity. The ability to monitor boxes was a bright spot during this time as this was an activity where we could be outside enjoying nature and still accomplish the task of monitoring, in the ongoing support of the mountain bluebird.

This was, as best as we can tell, a good if not an above average year for bluebird fledglings. They seemed to arrive early and went to work raising their families and

Monitor forms

If you are monitoring a trail, please ask for and fill out a Trail Monitor's Agreement form. It tells the MBTCS your identity, the location of your trail and ensures that the trail is being monitored and will continue to be monitored should you want or need to give up your trail in the future. You can find the form on our website, www.bluebirdtrails.org and you can return it to Steven Shumborski by email at sshumborski@gmail.com

Helpers sought

We are seeking volunteers to help assemble nest boxes. Experience is not necessary, but it probably wouldn't hurt. If you can provide some time and assistance, please contact Ken Mackintosh at 403-345-5806.

AGM postponed

The pandemic has affected our lives in so many ways, and led to the cancellation or postponement of many events, activities and meetings. The MBTCS would ordinarily be holding its annual meeting in late October but in view of the pandemic, safety precautions and the need for a venue that provides adequate social distancing for an unpredictable number of meeting attendees, the executive agreed to postpone the AGM until a later date. We will keep our members informed through the website and by email as needed. We hope to meet again in person sometime soon.

in some cases two broods.

I hosted our annual Orientation Day on June 6 this year. It was a lovely spring morning with eight people from Lethbridge and surrounding area eagerly participating and becoming acquainted with the nesting life cycle of the mountain bluebird.

We also got the opportunity to observe other bird species as well as a resident prairie rattlesnake. We felt fortunate we managed to still have this orientation day, when most other in-person events and activities were cancelled. We achieved this by being outdoors and adhering to the physical distancing guidelines. We even had half the participants desiring to investigate having their own trail. It ended up a great day!

As most of you know, we are a non-profit charitable society that survives on the generous gifts from individuals and organizations like you.

We were very excited as an executive when we were notified that we would be receiving a gift of \$5,000 from the Irene Matilda Clarke estate. This gift will go a long way to assist us in buying more supplies to build more bluebird boxes, as our current supply of boxes is essentially depleted. If you have an interest in building boxes and/or a facility that we could use for this activity, please contact us.

Thank you again to Steven Shumborski, our hard working Trail Master, for recording, building, renovating and restoring the many bluebird boxes on those trails in southern Alberta that have been abandoned or on existing and new trails that require support. Thanks also to Curtis Goodman, our new Webmaster who has done a masterful job in upgrading and improving our website. If you haven't had a chance to view the new website go to bluebirdtrails.org.

As an executive we felt that, in light of the current pandemic restrictions, we would opt to delay our Annual General Meeting until the spring. We will keep you posted as to what format that may take.

We would like to thank everyone connected to our Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society for all of your efforts during these most challenging times. We could not have achieved what was achieved without you.

Be strong and carry-on!

More trail monitors welcomed to the fold

By Steven Shumborski, Trail Master

Thank you to everyone who looks after bluebird nest boxes.

Nest Boxes

We have about 2,623 MBT nest boxes. There are 101 monitors on record. The number of monitors is slowly increasing as the size of trails is being decreased. When someone retires, the large trails are split into trails of 25 -35 nest boxes. The trail size has been decreased to 20 or 30 to make looking after the nest boxes more of an outing than a chore.

Nest box renovation and new box installation

It has been another active year for renovation with boxes in the Beaver Mines, North Burmis, Chapel Rock Road, and Heritage Acres areas being upgraded to drop-down floor style boxes with full cover roofs. The spacing of the boxes was changed to locate boxes near treed areas with pasture with a 250 metre spacing between nest boxes.

So far this year 26 new boxes were installed as well as 133 renovated boxes

for a total of 159 as of Oct. 8. I have another 14 renovated boxes and 18 new boxes ready to install. If you want to replace your fixed floor boxes with drop floor boxes, let me know. Over the last six years 556 MBT nest boxes have been renovated and returned to service. I have had a hand in 350 new boxes that were installed.

If you are interested in renovating nest boxes you can use the Nest Box Renovation Suggestions document on the website. Contact me if you need the metal flashing for the top of the nest box.

No trails available as of Oct. 8, 2020

If you are interested in a trail, let me know which area, and I will keep you in mind for a trail when one comes available.

The new website by Curtis attracted a lot of attention and all of the trails that were available have now been taken. Thank you Curtis for setting up the website notices that brought in new monitors.

Email is the best way to contact me sshumborski@gmail.com

2020 Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society Executive:

President: Jim Leitch

Vice-president: Steven Shumborski

Treasurer: Ken Moore

Secretary: Barb Glen

Trail Master: Steven Shumborski

Directors: Joe Michielsen, Ken Mackintosh,
Gerry Kylo, Jan Warren, Chris Bolton

We are always looking for more volunteers to serve as directors. It's not difficult! We have a minimum of four executive meetings per year, plus the annual meeting. We talk about bluebirds and boxes and how best to foster continued attention to bluebird trails and nest box habitat. Please consider joining the executive. Call Jim at 403-320-8970 to learn more.

Welcome to Curtis, our interim webmaster

By Jan Warren
Former webmaster

The torch for the Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society (MBTCS) is being passed! We welcome Curtis Goodman to the job.

Over the past few years we have endeavoured to update our website and make it more interactive and useful to all the folks involved with and interested in bluebirds. I am pleased to tell you that we have found an excellent webmaster.

Here is Curtis's story on how he became involved.

From Curtis Goodman:

I first became aware of MBTCS through the advocacy of Ken Moore through our work together at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre.

My involvement with the Lethbridge Naturalists' Society connected me with Steven Shumborski, who helped me to understand the ins and outs of trail monitoring through presentations about open trails seeking monitors.

In early 2020 I was approached with the opportunity to help the Mountain Bluebird

Trail Conservation Society improve their web presence. Jan Warren connected with me to outline the vision for the website and how it could support current and prospective members. We worked together to ensure a seamless transition to the new design.

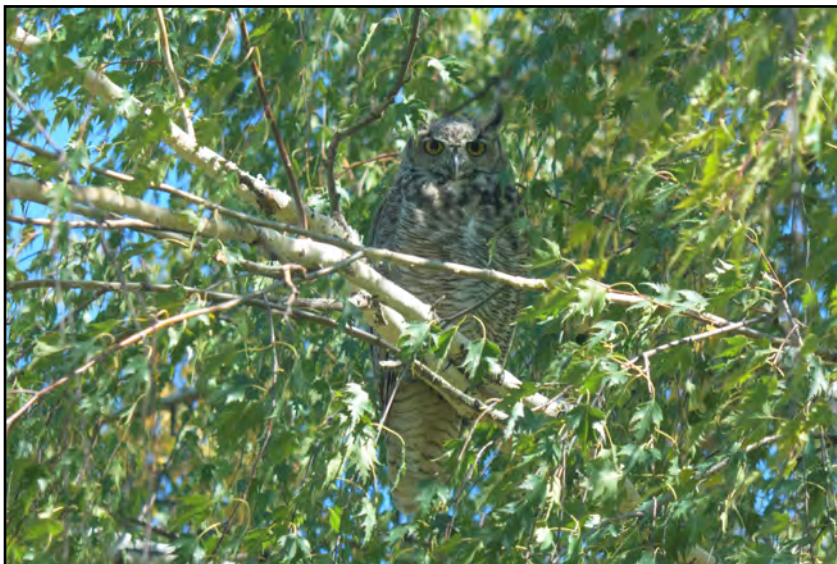
Thanks to everyone who has provided feedback, editorial suggestions, contributed photos, submitted statistics over the years, and of course everyone who is actively supporting mountain bluebirds!

Special thanks to Joe Michielsen for his thorough edits and review of the many pages of web content.

You can contribute to the MBTCS website. Want a photo featured? Have a story from the trails to share? Do you have a resource other members should know about?

Any and all input is appreciated so the website is an accurate reflection of the society and its members!

I look forward to learning more about mountain bluebirds and helping to support everyone's work with MBTCS.



You never know who is watching when out on a bluebird trail. MBTCS Director Ken Mackintosh captured this owl photo while out and about this summer.



Having a bluebird trail provides many opportunities to see and photograph more than only bluebirds. Here are a few photos by Joe Michielsen of everything from flora to fauna and even a few bluebirds, here and on following pages.



Tree swallow with nestlings



Cactus flower



Brown thrasher nest



Barrel cactus flower



Canada goose gosling



Once-married underwing moth



Deer mouse in a nestbox, left, and a cottontail, above



Long-billed curlew, above, and long-billed curlew chick, above right. Below right, Western wood peewee, female. Below, Western wood peewee, male





Lazuli bunting



Tree swallow nest



Prairie rattlesnake



Sawwhet owl below



Great gray owl

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Happy bluebirding!