

# Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

Volume 15 - September 2014

Dedicated to studying, conserving and helping restore the natural range  
of the Mountain Bluebird in Southern Alberta

[www.bluebirdtrails.com](http://www.bluebirdtrails.com)

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## Presidents Message

by Joe Michielsen

Like usual the weather was a major factor in the success of mountain bluebirds nesting and fledging this year. Although the data has not been compiled I know of specific areas of the west that had many fledglings succumb to the June rains while only a short distance away most nestlings survived the inclement weather. Personally, the biggest problem on my trails was not weather related, but a spike in the raccoon population and their appetite for not only BB eggs but the adults and fledglings. Until this year I had very few nests destroyed by them.

On a positive note, we had the honor of **The Lethbridge and Area Community Foundation** granting us funds to purchase a GPS unit, a computer and material for building nesting boxes. The new GPS has been purchased and is available through Gerry Kylo for any member that needs to mark nesting boxes. We ask that any member with a trail has each box marked so Gerry can map the location. If you have not used a GPS before Gerry can arrange to show you how to operate it or have someone go out with you to mark the locations. As I write our new computer has been ordered and will be delivered before the end of September.

We have not yet proceeded with the purchase of the box building materials until we finalize who and how they will be built. As explained in the last newsletter Goldie had worked with the Lethbridge Correctional Center inmates to build boxes the last number of years, but has now retired.

- **AGM October 25<sup>th</sup> 2pm at Helen Schuler Nature Center**

Tour and see the new Helen Schuler Center, and enter TO WIN a draw for a mountain bluebird for your mantle!!

The Theme for our Meeting is “ **A CELEBRATION of Birds**” Featured speaker will be from The Nature Conservancy , and also we will be honoring Goldie- our connection to getting the correctional center personnel to make our boxes for us!! We will be sharing photographs and stories of the birds we saw while monitoring our boxes!!

Please bring your favorite photo or story and plan to join our conversation. Find out what is involved in keeping MBTCS running and the what beneficial activities we support!

- **Trail management and Monitor training** We have new computer programs and want to involve more members to manage- come and see our new computer and its capabilities!
- **Other Opportunities – watch for new ways to log your nestboxes on our website coming in November-**
- **Coming in February- the Monitors Training, and the Banders tours in may 2015!**

He put together an extremely detailed nesting box construction pamphlet that the next carpenter can use to build boxes. We have several possibilities, but not a final plan on how we will get boxes built before next season.

I am still looking into having MBT Chapters in both the Pincher Creek and Medicine Hat areas. I have been in contact with members in both areas but have not had a chance to put together the plan.

As many of you know, Gwen Tietz has decided she will not be our Master Bander next year so I am discussing other possibilities with the Canadian Wildlife Service so that we can continue banding. Thank you, banders, for getting all your unused bands and the stats back to Gwen and to the monitors - thanks for getting your information to Gerry!!

Hope to see you all at our AGM

Sincerely, Joe Michielsen, chair MBTCS

## **You are invited!**

**“A Celebration Of Birds” and our AGM – October 25<sup>th</sup> – 2 pm**

**New location!! Helen Schuler Nature Center**

Come on down and enjoy a chance to share with other Bluebird Enthusiasts all the things we are celebrating!

We will be [acknowledging the building of the many boxes produced by Goldie](#) and the folks at the Correctional center! – we hope to learn more about the birds of Waterton, and show you our new trail mapping -compliments of **the Lethbridge Community Foundation!**

Come hear firsthand stories about this past season of monitoring and banding bluebirds and see more photos taken from our workshops!

We are looking for support on the MBTCS executive if you can spare 2 hours every couple of months- we need GPS and computer skill support!

**Please come out Saturday Oct 25<sup>th</sup> at 2pm down at the Helen Schuler Nature Center to support us!**



### **Did a Botfly cause this injury?**

While I was on the first check of my BB trail north of Tempest along the Oldman River, I saw a male BB that had a swelling on the back of his head. There were 6 eggs in the box that he was near and as it turned out the BB pair were fairly 'tame'. With my 250 mm power, zoom lens, I was able to get a few close-up photos of the back of this male's head. I had an idea that the hollow might be caused by a Botfly larva since I had seen similar marks on cattle infected with the larvae. When I got home I checked the internet to see if there were cases of this reported. Several websites told of this occurrence in BB's and some of the photos were similar to mine. I had seen adult botflies in some of my BB nesting boxes which is probably why I thought this may have been what occurred to this male.

When I next visited the box where I had seen the infected male, I found 6 fledglings. The male and female were nearby scolding me for being at the box. I snapped many photos of both parents. The male had a grub in his beak and on several occasions flew up to the entrance hole but never entered. Both of them came almost within reach and I got beautiful photos of her hovering and both of them on the fencepost or wire near their nest-box. Then suddenly he just flew to the entrance and went in! I quickly covered the opening with my hand and then stuck my old sock-plug in the hole. This was my first male recapture! I was able to identify him by a band which I had put on him 2 years earlier, when he was a fledgling about 1 km from this box. I quickly took a couple of photos of him in my hand and inspected the back of his head. The wound had healed over so I couldn't positively identify the cause.

[Please check out our website after the AGM, October 25<sup>th</sup> for some important updates!!](http://bluebirdtrails.org)

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## MBTCS chosen for Lethbridge Community Foundation Grant support!!



The Spring 2014 Grants were presented by the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta on May 9 at Westminster School in Lethbridge, AB.

The Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society was among the 30 organizations that received grants. This grant will help to replace old nesting boxes add new boxes, and to purchase a GPS system to assist volunteers in locating over 2,000 boxes on various trails across the region. We are very grateful to the Lethbridge Foundation for this support and look forward to new updated information gathering for our Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society!

What is The Foundation? learn more here. [cflsa.ca/](http://cflsa.ca/)

AND for more on those beautiful mountain bluebirds visit [bluebirdtrails.org](http://bluebirdtrails.org)

### Contacting us for replacement boxes



Another season is about to start and it is time to clean, repair and replace a few of those nesting boxes. You can contact the following people to obtain new boxes:

Ken Mackintosh, Coaldale  
(403) 345-5806

Joe Michielsen, Coaldale  
(403) 345-4777

The Pincher Creek Co-op continues to donate plywood annually.

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