

Carol Porter Bluebird Trail Results For 2016



The Carol Porter Bluebird Trail consists of 92 boxes located along the Eagle Butte, Ranchville, Jackpot, Thelma and Wildcat Roads. This trail has been continuously monitored since 1989 with only minor changes to the number of boxes and locations of these boxes. These boxes are situated on fence posts along a 55 kilometer reach.

During the period April through August these boxes are visited and serviced weekly (on a three week rotational basis) by a devoted group of volunteers whose efforts result in optimal success in the fledging of young (Fledging is used in this

report as the successful rearing of the young from eggs to departure from the box). These volunteers service the boxes affecting any necessary repairs and count and record the eggs and/or young at each box. After the young have fledged they clean out each box readying them for a second nesting or for the following year. In 2106 this dedicated group of volunteers included:

- Peggy and Mike Hansen
- Lorraine and Randy Stotz
- Mel Bender
- Ann and Dennis Hall
- 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
- Ian and Angela Turner

Hearty thanks to these volunteers without whom the rearing success would be much diminished. Also thanks to Ben Velnor who keeps us supplied with replacement boxes.

2016 was a record year for the Mountain Bluebirds with some 328 young successfully departing the boxes. In all 70 successful nests were tallied. A total of 438 eggs were laid. While the number of eggs (100) that didn't produce successful young seems high the percentage of successful young to total number of eggs laid is consistent with past years. Of the 100 eggs that didn't produce raised young; 37 were abandoned, 35 were sterile and 28 nestlings were hatched but died in the nests. A large portion of the abandoned eggs (includes disappearance of eggs) mysteriously disappeared from the end of the B Route and the beginning of the M Route. Likely these eggs were taken by unknown predators.

Tree Swallows also use the nest boxes and are in direct competition with the Mountain Bluebirds for the use of the boxes. Fortunately Tree Swallows arrive a little later than the bluebirds and thus the male bluebird will have staked out his box usually repelling all potential rivals. Squabbles still do occur at some box sites and duplicating boxes (on side by side posts) often can reduce the intense rivalry. In 2016 some 221 Tree Swallows were reared in the boxes. Tree Swallows in their own right are desirable species for their insect eating abilities but they are more numerous and are less dependent on man made cavities for successful nesting. Nesting boxes have principally been installed to provide nesting cavities for the bluebirds whose natural cavities have been usurped by alien species such as European Starling and House Sparrow.

For more details and/or historical records contact Milt Spitzer at (403) 528-3120 or by email at: milton.spitzer@gmail.com.