

BLUEBIRDS

YOUR CHANCE TO SEE A TRAIL

Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society president Jim Leitch will hold an orientation session Saturday, June 5 for anyone interested in seeing a trail and what's involved in monitoring bluebird boxes. Social distancing and pandemic-related rules in effect at that time will apply. It is a chance to see bluebirds and their eggs and maybe even baby bluebirds. The session runs from 9 a.m. to noon, beginning at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre in Lethbridge. Jim will take participants on a tour of a nearby trail. There is no need to pre-register but if more information is desired, contact Jim at 403-320-8970.

Need nest boxes?

Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society director Ken Mackintosh is the guy to call if you want or need nest boxes. Boxes are available to replace old or worn out units or to expand trails. Ken can be reached at 403-345-5806.



Spring is here and the bluebirds have returned. We are looking forward to another year of monitoring the trails.

President's report

By Jim Leitch

Another spring is here, evidenced by the recent arrival of the familiar American robin. We also know of course it's spring in the countryside, with the stunning flash of the beautiful mountain bluebird. There were early sightings this year in the foothills in mid-March.

Spring is a wonderful time of year as it brings us hope for the future and the anticipation of new things and a reminder of old familiar things. This could not be more true this year. We were all eagerly looking forward to spring and some distraction from this never-ending pandemic.

Those familiar things we look forward to are the readying of our boxes and sharing in the experiences of another wonderful bluebird nesting season. (Cont'd)



Return of bluebirds

First reports of bluebird sightings in southern Alberta for 2021:

March 8: Ken Poulsen reported a male bluebird singing north of the Oldman Reservoir.

March 13: Ryan Boechler reported six female bluebirds seen on Highway 25 south of Highway 526 near Enchant.

March 13: Blake Lowden sighted a male bluebird near Beaver Creek west of Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump.

Trails by numbers

Trail Master Steven Shumborski reports that our society has approximately 2,660 nest boxes and he is steadily increasing the number found and added to inventory. There are 103 trail monitors on record.

Trail sizes are being reduced to 20 or 30 boxes each so more people can be involved.

As of March 27, a trail is available on RR 301, just off Highway 6 south of Pincher Creek. Contact Steven if you are interested in monitoring this trail.

President's report, cont'd

I plan to have my Trail Orientation Day again this year on Saturday, June 5, on my trail just west of Lethbridge. This is a great opportunity for all birders, newcomers and those interested in having their own trail, to experience what an active trail looks like. Please refer to our website for further details. This half-day event, like last year, will be conducted respecting the health guidelines at that time.

Joe Michielsen is working on getting our monitoring permit from the government for this year and will forward the permit to the monitors when received. In the meantime use last year's permit.

Again a big thank you to our Trail Master, Steven Shumborski, for tracking down old abandoned trails, repairing, replacing or moving boxes as needed. If you are aware of an abandoned trail in southern Alberta, please contact Steven at sshumborski@gmail.com.

We hosted for the first time last month our 2020 annual general meeting on line via Zoom. It went very well and gave us all a chance to 'meet' some new members and hear what was happening on their trails. We look forward to having our 2021 AGM in person this year.

As a society we continue to be thankful and impressed with the expertise and efforts of our new Web Master, Curtis Goodman, and all that he does to maintain our website. We have had enquiries to the site from all over Alberta. If you haven't had a chance to check it out, go to bluebirdtrails.org.

If you need new boxes, we have some available. Contact Ken Mackintosh at kejemack@hotmail.com.

A big shout out and thank you to Jim Penny and Jack Sherman. They are a couple of retired local fellows who wanted to support the society and keep busy and they sure did, by building 100 boxes during their downtime this past winter.

Also a big thank you to Del Peters from Saskatoon, who is retired and was also seeking a project. Del built 25 boxes and hand delivered them to us.

We as an organization are always greatly appreciative when folks volunteer like this. It inspires us to continue to do what we do.

Enjoy the season and the satisfaction that comes from working together to support the beautiful mountain bluebird.

Renovations, transfers and paying attention

**By Steven Shumborski
Trail Master**

Last year was an active year for renovation with boxes in the North Burmis, Chapel Rock, Heritage Acres, Lyndon Creek, and Waterton Gas Plant areas upgraded to drop down floor style boxes with full cover roofs.

The boxes were removed, renovated and reinstalled at a spacing of 250 metres between nest boxes to respect the bluebirds' territorial needs. The boxes were located near treed areas with pasture whenever possible.

Tyler Ray took over the trail in Lyndon Creek, removed and renovated the boxes, reinstalled them and sent me the GPS locations. Thank you Tyler.

About one-third of the 2,660 MBT nest boxes have been renovated. 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.

Transfer of trails

It is a pleasure to transfer a trail from one monitor to the next when I have all the GPS coordinates for the boxes to show the new monitor where the boxes are. I am able to prepare a package of information for the new monitor that includes: map, GPS coordinates file, Monitor Agreement, an Excel monitoring form and a sample of how the form is filled out.

When I have all this information, I can execute the transfer in half an hour. When I have no information, or the trail is abandoned, it takes weeks, months or years to find the boxes, renovate as required, then find a monitor for the trail.

When you are no longer able to look after a trail, let me know. If you have friends or neighbours who are interested, let me know so they can sign the Monitor Agreement.

If a trail is transferred to someone and I am not notified, I lose contact with that trail. Also, they are not MBT members unless they fill out the Monitor Agreement, and will not be on the email distribution list.

The trail may then be looked after for a year or two and then is abandoned. This is a too frequent occurrence and the result is the boxes fill up with nesting material and are no longer used, or the roofs come off and they are unusable.

The landowners are rightly offended to have a nest box on their fence that is not cared for, so please let me know if you no longer want or are no longer able to look after the trail.

Talking with landowners

I talked with a landowner who was very unhappy with having bluebird nest boxes on his fences. The previous monitor had passed the trail on to someone they knew, and after a couple years the landowner noticed the roofs off, the boxes full and he had to stop what he was doing to look after them.

If nobody is going to look after them, remove them, he told me.

This a reminder that putting nest boxes on fences is a privilege at the discretion of the landowner. If the boxes are not looked after we are no longer welcome in the neighbourhood.

Monitors who have a lot of nest boxes on their trail might consider sharing the bounty and altering the size of their trail so more but smaller trails can be available to other mountain bluebird supporters. Contact me if this is an option you would consider.

The best method is via email at sshumborski@gmail.com.

<p>Vortex Viper Spotting Scope and Tripod for sale. \$800. Chris: 403-339-1167</p>
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www.bluebirdtrails.org is the place to be and see

By Curtis Goodman
Web Master

The Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society website helps the organization share its mission, statistics, research, observations, sightings and much more. Everyone is welcome to submit content for the website. Articles, photos and links are all wanted and needed, and can be sent to projectgoodman@gmail.com.

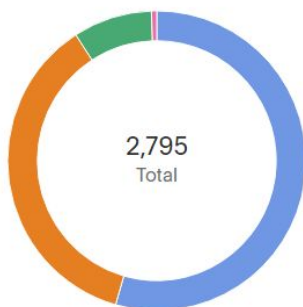
The website goals for next year:

- * Maintain an active web presence through regular page updates (news and events)
- * Thorough review of the top five pages, updating as necessary
- * Increase photo content on the member gallery page
- * Improve search engine optimization to increase page ranking and inbound traffic
- * Integrate CanadaHelps donation button call to action.

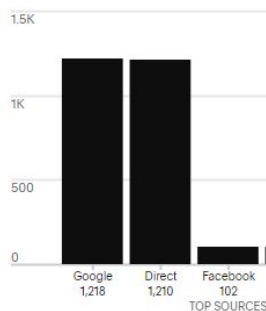
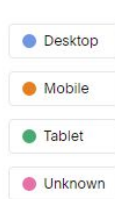
The cost to benefit from the website is reasonable. It costs approximately \$180 to accommodate about 2,800 unique visitors. That’s about 15.5 visitors per dollar spent.



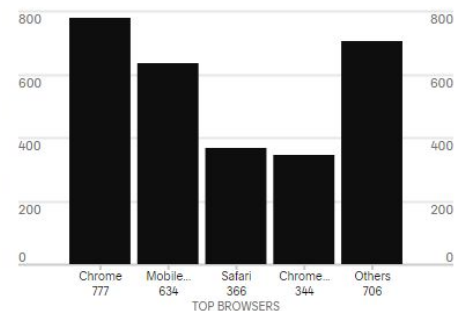
Top Devices by Visits



Top Sources by Visits



Top Browsers by Visits



**2021 Mountain Bluebird Trails
Conservation Society Executive:**

President: Jim Leitch

Vice-president: Vacant

Treasurer: Ken Moore

Secretary: Barb Glen

Trail Master: Steven Shumborski

Web Master: Curtis Goodman

Directors: Joe Michielsen, Ken Mackintosh,
Gerry Kyлло, Jan Warren, Chris Bolton, Ashley
Gould

We are always looking for more volunteers to
serve as directors. It's not difficult.

We have two or three 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.



MBTCS director Joe Michielsen provided
these photos. Obviously it's not a bluebird, but
this feathered friend was an interesting
sighting nevertheless. It's a Saw Whet owl,
taken on MBCTS director Ken Mackintosh's
land near his bluebird trail along the Oldman
River north of Coaldale.

