

BLUEBIRDS

YOUR CHANCE TO SEE A TRAIL

Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society president Jim Leitch will hold an orientation session Saturday, June 3 for anyone interested in seeing a trail and what's involved in monitoring bluebird boxes. It is a chance to see bluebirds and their eggs and maybe even baby bluebirds. As well, this day usually offers sightings of other birds and wildlife. 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. Number of participants is limited to minimize disruption on private land. Register through our website: www.bluebirdtrails.org.

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 we are looking forward to another year of monitoring and seeing beautiful sights like this one. Trail Master Steven Shumborski shot this photo of shooting stars along East Trout Creek trail in the Porcupine Hills.

President's report

I think we can say that spring is here but when I look at the weather forecast for the third week of April and I see some temperatures just above freezing I begin to wonder.

The telltale sign that spring has arrived, regardless of the weather, is when I hear of early sightings of the beautiful mountain bluebird back here in southern Alberta. A bluebird was sighted by the owner where my trail resides on April 1. There were even earlier sightings in other parts of the province in the later part of March.

This is an exciting time of year for us as monitors, with even a sense of anticipation in the air, as we make our initial trips to our trails to inspect our boxes to see how they fared over winter. It is a time of repair, movement or cleaning out of our boxes to ensure they are ready for the eager bluebird couples wanting to start a family. (Continued)



Trail Master Steven Shumborski advised that he is accepting requests for nest box renovation to be done after the 2023 nesting season. He will add those to renovations he plans in the Crowsnest Pass area. Steven can be contacted at sshumborski@gmail.com.

He further notes: I have had a couple requests from landowners to install boxes on their property. This is a way to get more boxes installed since almost every suitable road in southern Alberta already has nest boxes installed. Expanding placement of nest boxes onto private property is a way to provide more nesting sites for Mountain Bluebirds.

If you are unable to continue monitoring, let me know and I will check the boxes, renovate and return the boxes to service.



President's report, continued

Some pairs will actually return to the same box or to the same vicinity year after year. This has been validated by the faithful bluebird banders of years past. We no longer band bluebirds in southern Alberta, but the important work of monitoring and maintaining boxes continues to ensure we have a thriving bluebird population in the future.

I will once again be hosting a half-day orientation of my trail on the west side of Lethbridge on Saturday, June 3. Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact our website at bluebirdtrails.org. This is a great opportunity for all birders and those interested in having their own trail to see what an active trail looks like.

Like last year, we decided, as a board, to shift the annual AGM to the spring rather than the fall. The 2022 AGM was held March 18 at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre. It was also available to members via Zoom. We had 21 interested members join us for the half day meeting.

We were given the opportunity to view a few wonderful videos on the great work of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, which occurs right here in southern Alberta. We also got a brief update from University of Lethbridge Master's student, Aaron Veale, on the hybridization of the mountain and western bluebird. He found no evidence of hybridization between the two species at this time.

A special thank you to our outgoing director, Jerry Kylo, for all his many contributions to the society over the years. Welcome to Sherri Bohnert, who joins us as a director.

Once again I would like to acknowledge the great work that our Trail Master, Steven Shumborski, contributes to the society by restoring old abandoned trails, supporting existing monitors with their trails and recruiting new monitors as required. We have over 100 monitors who maintain nearly 2,700 boxes in southern Alberta.

I would also like to thank all the board executive members for their hard work and commitment to ensure the society continues for many years to come.

If you are in need of boxes for your trail, please contact Ken Mackintosh at 403-345-5806. As well, I would like to encourage all monitors to report your 2022 bluebird data to Joe Michielsen (joe.michielsen@hotmail.com). This data helps us validate our work as monitors to provide habitat for mountain bluebirds.

Thank you to all trail monitors for all that you do to support the beautiful mountain bluebird
Have a wonderful season!

BLUEBIRD TRAILS SOON AVAILABLE!

There are no trails available right now, but there will be some soon, says Trail Master Steven Shumborski.

The Paradise Canyon Golf Course nest boxes in Lethbridge will be available for monitoring after they have been upgraded. They were installed in 1994 and need some work.

There will be a trail available later this year along East Trout Creek Road and Skyline in the Porcupine Hills. The boxes were installed last spring and will have a full season this year to identify which boxes the birds use. The boxes not used will be removed, then the trail will be available for a monitor.

Prospective monitors should be aware that many of the boxes are over 100 metres away from the road on the nearest fence. There are also steep hills to climb. The East Trout Creek road is drifted in until May and is a dirt road that becomes slippery when wet in the spring and summer.



Jim Leitch checks a nest box along his trail in Lethbridge.



Bluebird Report

2021 2022

# of eggs reported - first brood	1492	1235
# that fledged reported - first brood	1324	1072
# of sterile eggs - first brood	192	80
# of dead nestlings - first brood	117	134
# of abandoned nestlings - first brood	118	48
# of eggs reported - second brood	355	397
# that fledged reported - second brood	321	328
# of sterile eggs reported - second brood	15	31
# of dead nestlings reported - second brood	10	27
# of abandoned nestlings reported - second brood	51	61
total # of eggs reported	1851	1693
total # that fledged reported	1645	1447
# of sterile bb eggs reported	207	114
# of dead bb nestlings reported	127	172
# of MBT members with trails	123	?
# of MBT monitors	119	?
# of MBT members that maintain but don't monitor	4	5
# of boxes reported	1422	997
# of boxes not reported	1151	?
total boxes	2573	?
# of members that did not report	84	?
# of members that reported	39	34

This report contains information from bluebird monitors and maintainers who have trails using MBT nest boxes. The number of members with trails who report is low, less than 50%. We use the information gathered to determine how well the bluebird population is doing in the areas we provide nesting opportunities. The poor response means we cannot provide useful information to our members. (Continued)

If everyone reported, whether they have all the data or not, we could report how many bluebirds fledged from our nest boxes and have complete details on all the other information that is requested. IF YOU HAVE NOT REPORTED, IT IS NOT TOO LATE! Any information provided will be added to the spreadsheet as I receive it. Please send it to joe.michielsen@hotmail.com. The form is sent out in late August to all members. If you merely maintain the boxes on your trail but do not monitor nest information, please send me a note stating that along with the number of boxes on your trail. Any and all information is important

**2023 Mountain Bluebird Trails
Conservation Society Executive:**

President: Jim Leitch
Vice-president: Curtis Goodman
Treasurer: Kathy Koenig
Secretary: Barb Glen
Trail Master: Steven Shumborski
Web Master: Curtis Goodman
Directors: Joe Michielsen, Ken Mackintosh,
Connie Chapman, Rick Williams, Steven
Shumborski, Sherri Bohnert

Directors at large: Bob Cooper, Denise Cocioloni-Amatto, Milton Spitzer, Trudy Woolford.

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 how best to foster continued attention to bluebirds and nest box habitat. Please consider joining the executive. Call Jim at 403-320-8970 to learn more.

