

2020 Mountain Bluebird Report

This was an excellent year for Legacy's Mountain Bluebird Trail—a 6-mile trail NE of Olds, Alberta.

This year the 30 original boxes were paired and numbered—the trail now consists of **60 boxes**, meaning **less competition** between Tree Swallows and Mountain Bluebirds.

This obviously was successful as our **bluebird nests increased from 6 in 2019 to 11 in 2020** even though the number of locations remained the same.

We fledged **39 young bluebirds in 2020** (compared to 16 in 2019 when many failures were due to competition with Wrens and Tree Swallows).

We banded **53 bluebirds in 2020** (9 adults, 44 young) and recovered 2 adult bluebirds, one banded on Dick Stauffer's trail about 15 km SSE, and one banded on our trail last year!

Tree Swallows were also very successful. Their nests increased from 16 in 2019 to 23 in 2020. We fledged **132 young Tree Swallows** this year compared to only 73 in 2019—nearly twice last year's hatch!

We also had **9 nests of House Wrens** (4 in 2019). About one-third (19) of all boxes remained empty.

I suspect we can **expect growth in Tree Swallow numbers in 2021**, as they require less territory than Mountain Bluebirds. With 11 nests on a 6-mile trail, we are at the upper-end of saturation, perhaps 1-2 more. And with luck (Mother Nature decides) some of our bluebird families will have a second clutch. (That did not happen this year.)

One sad event happened on the trail this year. For



7-day old Mountain Bluebirds | Sally Banks



Ron Reist Banding Birds | Veronica Reist



Tree swallow in Flight | Sally Banks

unknown reasons, an adult female bluebird died while brooding 6 young, resulting in their deaths. Possibly an avian virus or old age—she appeared well-nourished and outside temperatures were normal. Nature can sometimes be cruel.

Overall a very successful year!

Ron Reist
Legacy-Rotary Bluebird Trail Monitor