

## 2011 Pinelands Bluebird Trail Report by Nels Anderson

The somewhat warm spring with no icy blasts or deep freezes helped launch this year's Bluebird nesting season. The first nest start was found on April 9 and the first Bluebird egg on April 17. The first Bluebird fledged about May 16 and the last fledged on September 2 which clearly displays their extended nesting season. Of the 63 nest starts 46 fledged young. Although weather conditions were good in some areas of the woodlands Chickadee nests outnumbered the Bluebirds. Many times the poor Chickadee is ousted as a Bluebird or Tree Swallow will take over and build right on top of their nest, eggs and all. The gradual change in undergrowth and vegetation with shrubs becoming trees will favor one species or another which at times warrants a nest box be moved to a better location for Bluebirds. On the other hand an increase in nesting activity may require placing additional nest boxes however 100 yards is about as close as boxes can be and still attract Bluebirds in all of them. That new box must also be in suitable habitat so there are limitations.

Wasps continue to be a pest and several removals might be required before they get the idea. Birds will not nest in a box which has wasps, hornets etc. No single predator caused major problems this year although I suspect the two legged variety was responsible for eggs missing twice from the same box. A little Brown Bat took up residence and roosted in one box for a two week period and it was certainly welcome. White Bluebird eggs are uncommon yet one location has produced nothing but for two years now and the young are 100% Bluebird. Overall the local population is stable and the Eastern Bluebird is doing well in the Pinelands. As always, thanks to all who provide hospitality as well as nest box space making this Bluebird Trail possible and successful.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Bluebird nests	60	36	35	28	51	49	64	68	69	63
Bluebird fledged	150	91	95	66	152	159	206	195	219	207
Chickadee fledged	38	62	104	95	72	47	53	75	44	59
Tree Swallow fledged	29	27	28	36	45	29	35	20	33	41

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Ninety boxes monitored 20 times = 1,800 data points.