

2014 BLUEBIRD SUMMARY  
FOR PARTS OF SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY  
BY ALLEN JACKSON

Even though more boxes were added for the 2014 nesting season, production numbers were down - not alarmingly significant but still significant. For the trail monitors, residential sites and my bluebird trail, a total of 1074 young were banded. Another 100 fledged that did not get banded. In 2013, 1182 were banded with a total of 1300 fledging.

The likely explanation for the reduction were impacts from weather conditions. Previous information (bluebird restoration association of Wisconsin's information packet, 4th edition) documents that colder than normal weather in the overwintering grounds can suppress reproduction the following spring. No other cavity nesting songbird is subject to this reproductive influence. The bluebirds have to deal with severe weather on the overwintering grounds and fight for survival during their northward migration, arriving on their breeding grounds in less than ideal condition. This was evident for bluebirds southern new jersey in the first nesting cycle as fewer nesting attempts were the norm according to monitor observations. Some bluebird landlords reported no bluebirds nesting on their property in 2014, suggesting loss of bluebirds during the winter.

By June when the second nesting cycle began, the bluebirds were in better shape to breed. There was a significant increase in the number of nests, however many eggs did not hatch. Infertile eggs were common, sometimes entire clutches failed. 1, 2 and 3 young were banded in nests rather than the normal 4 or 5. Nest competition pressure only made it harder for the bluebirds to successfully produce young.

Black capped chickadees had a great year. Being an early nester, plenty of boxes were available with less bluebirds nesting. We should call this the year of the chickadee. The usual problem species, house sparrows, tree swallows and house wrens, took their toll on bluebird production, making it difficult during an already trying year.

#### Highlites for the season

- A bluebird chick with mostly white feathers was banded in Lower Alloway creek.
- A female bluebird in Millville used horse hair in the nest which wrapped around the lone chick's knee, causing the leg to atrophy and fall off. The one-legged chick did fledge.
- There were 2 (of 10) boxes with white eggs at the Atlantic county park in Estelle Manor. 8 boxes were bluebird active.
- Bluebirds in two boxes produced 3 clutches of young this year.
- All 7 boxes on a farm in Vineland produced young.
- Test cases using boxes with sky-lights show promise where house sparrows are prevalent.
- Middle township middle school wood shop classes continued to make bluebird boxes.
- Speaking engagements in Woodstown, New Egypt, Vineland, Millville, Estelle Manor and A.C. park and an article in the press of Atlantic city lead to many educational opportunities and additional boxes in the field to benefit bluebirds.
- A new trail with 7 boxes produced 5 clutches of young in Newfield.
- A new trail of 10 boxes in Millville produced 4 successful clutches.
- The bluebird that used the robin's nest in Deerfield last year successfully nested in a nabs style box this year.
- 50 cobalt blue glass bluebirds were purchased and are being marketed as the official bluebird of the njbbs.
- Partnerships with many people, groups and organizations continued to benefit bluebirds.
- Additional boxes and trails are being erected for 2015.
- NJBBS co-sponsored the first New Jersey Bluebird Festival with nest (nature environmental education today) in New Egypt. Many improvements for next year were recommended.