

2019 Report

2019 report to VWF by Rob H.

Estimated number of juveniles fledged:

Mountain Bluebird – 29

Tree Swallow – 332

The nest boxes were set in place starting on March 21 and 22 when the first returning mountain bluebird males arrive. Boxes that were not readily accessible due to deep snow or water in roadside ditches were finished from March 31 to April 18. Testing of the three horizontal nest boxes designed by Hans continued.

Results are determined by preparing boxes at the start of the nesting season, letting the birds nest in the boxes, then return in the middle of August to see which species have used the boxes and estimate fledgling numbers. I do not count egg numbers in order to minimize disturbance to the birds. Each species has a method of nest building. For example, Mountain Bluebirds use thin bladed grass and make a compact cup nest. Tree Swallows use thick bladed grass and devise a feather canopy to cover eggs and hatchlings. Mountain Bluebirds keep a very clean nest, removing any hatching excrement. Tree Swallows nests are messy with excrement.

Mountain Bluebird summary

5 total nests (all successful), 1 nest had two clutches. There were no unhatched eggs and I saw no dead hatchlings. Average number of fledglings per box was 5.8. Total fledged 29. There was later competition from Tree Swallows that possibly prevented second Mountain Bluebird broods.

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Tree Swallow summary

60 total nests, total eggs 351 (4 to 9 per nest, average 6.2). Estimated number fledged 332 (average per box 5.5). A nest with 8 or 9 eggs may involve two females laying eggs in the same nest box. The Roeben design test boxes all had successful Tree Swallow nests. House Sparrows nested in one box. House Sparrows use a wide variety of materials for nest building including man made items, animal hair, grass and other plants. House Wrens showed up late in 4 Tree Swallow boxes, filling the box with sticks but did not disturb the Tree Swallow nesting. I encountered mouse nests 5 times when I cleaned out the boxes.

All nest box numbers were re-applied when I cleaned out the boxes. Two boxes were damaged by cattle which had pulled the tops off – which I repaired. One box was ripped off the post by roadside mowing – which I replaced.