

2020 Report

2020 report to VWF by Rob H.

Spring Report

The nest box bottoms were set in place starting in March and into April. Fourteen boxes remain to be done as well as one box needs the top replaced. The snow drifts are still frozen hard enough to walk on.

The spring arrivals encountered so far are mountain Bluebirds, Robins, Western meadowlarks, Song Sparrows, Red-tailed Hawks, Rough legged Hawks, Horned larks, Canada Geese, Crows and Starlings.

Fall Report

Mountain Bluebird: 4 nests, 19 fledged

Tree Swallow: 58 nests, 309 fledged

Total nest boxes: 66

The year 2020 is the twentieth year that I have been maintaining this nest box trail. Where did the time go? It has been a strange year with the covid 19 restrictions, yet a seemingly normal year for the birds that use the nest boxes. I kept my nest box monitoring travel to just the spring setup and the late summer windup.

Spring setup (bottoms in place) was accomplished between March 13 and April 15, depending on when I could access the boxes due to variations in snow cover and water filled ditches. I added a nest box to my back yard fence in late April when a Tree swallow pair insisted on having a nest there. They were successful in raising four fledglings even though House Sparrows and a House Wren tried to interfere.

I made the end of season checks between August 20 and 24. This includes assessing the nest to see which species (or intruder) had occupied the box, looking for unhatched eggs or dead birds, then pushing the used nest out of the bottom. Both top and bottom open on these monitoring boxes. The

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top is re-attached and the bottom is left open to prevent mice from nesting. I remarked all box identifiers.

Mountain Bluebirds: I saw the first male on April 13. There were likely some returned by late march. There were no second egg clutches this year. Total nests – 4, fledged juveniles – 19, only 1 unhatched egg.

Tree Swallows: Most had returned by April 30. Total nests – 58, but 2 were abandoned, fledged juveniles – 309, 21 unhatched eggs. House Wrens disturbed five boxes, House Sparrows disturbed two boxes.

I also look after 12 nest boxes at the Giebelhaus property at the edge of Vegreville. These are small boxes suitable for Tree Swallows but not Bluebirds. There were 5 tree Swallow pairs with 23 young fledged, 4 empty boxes, 2 boxes with House Wrens, and 1 box disturbed by House Sparrows. This brings the total boxes to 78.

The three Roeben horizontal design boxes were successful again with 18 Tree Swallows fledged, but House Wrens filled one box with spruce sticks after the tree swallows vacated the box. Box SR3 was full of feathers, whereas box R10 only had feathers at the back of the box.

I photographed all three boxes showing the nesting results.

Unfortunately vandals (uncivilized humans) damaged two nest boxes on Akasu Hill. One box was missing (so presumed stolen), and one was ripped from the fence post (which I replaced). I am thinking of removing all four boxes on that road.