

# Rube Johnston Bluebird Trail 2023 – Fall Report

Maintained by Robert B. Hughes for The Vegreville Wildlife Federation

**Fledged Birds: Mountain Bluebirds 20 in four boxes, Tree Swallows 256 in 56 boxes**

Nest Boxes Disturbed by Other Species: House Wren 8, House Sparrow 1, Mouse nests 10.

I checked the boxes on Sept. 5 to Sept. 9, 2023. This was later than usual due to all the wildfire smoke. Consequently, I found more than the usual late Deer Mice nesting in the boxes.

**Mountain Bluebirds (MB)** nested in four boxes this year, with one clutch in each box, for a total of 20 fledglings. The first male was seen on April 4, near Box J1. I am still finding low nest box use by Mountain Bluebirds across the trail. Box J1 also had a TS nest started but not used, after the MB finished.

**Tree Swallows (TS)** initiated nests in 56 boxes. TS observed at most boxes by April 29. TS egg laying was delayed at least three weeks, due to cool and dry weather, causing a lack of insects. There were 20 dead hatchlings and 11 non-viable eggs. Seven nests were abandoned for unknown reasons, likely a lack of insect food. One box was taken over by House Sparrows. All House Wren disturbance consisted of piles of twigs, after TS had finished.

**Roeben Test Boxes (horizontal design):** TS nested in all three boxes Box SR3, at the VWF shooting range had 4 TS fledged. Box R10 had 5 and Box R19 had 4 TS fledged. Egg laying was late, sometime after July 6. As in previous years, the TS parents cover the full floor with nest grass, not only at the back. But I saw no evidence of two females nesting. Included with this report are end of season photos of these boxes.

## **Maintenance:**

As I worked along the trail, I re-marked all box identifiers, and tightened fence post screws.

**Mileage and Time:** Spring 125 miles/200 km, 6 hours. Fall 125 miles/200 km, 12 hours.

**Total: 250 miles/400 km, 18 hours worked.**

**Robert B. Hughes, 2023.12.07**