



# THE BLUE HERON

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To the Board of Directors and all the members, I wish you a very productive and successful Club year.

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## ANNUAL DUES ARE NOW DUE.

Dear Members, our membership year runs from April to March, therefore everyone's membership expires April 2010. If in doubt please check your card.

It costs us money to carry on the operation of the Club. Your financial support is critical. For the cost of a membership you receive a great return on your investment.

### Annual Membership Fees

|                  |         |             |         |
|------------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Single ...       | \$25.00 | Family ...  | \$35.00 |
| Corresponding .. | \$15.00 | Student ... | \$10.00 |

## Annexes

Christmas Bird Count Tables ..... 9-10

## HENSLOW'S SPARROWS CARDEN IBA 2009

By Bruce Wilson

On June 13 Jean and I along with Tyler Hoar were taking part in the Carden Bird Blitz II point counts organized by the Couchiching Conservancy, Ontario Field Ornithologists and the Toronto Ornithological Club. Our group was going



into the Windmill Ranch to monitor some points in the interior of the property. We had dropped off another team and were heading west when we stopped to look at an Upland Sandpiper sitting on a rock on the south side of the road. At that time Jean said she could hear a bird singing on her side (north) of the truck but could not identify it. I listened a bit and immediately shut off the truck and jumped out of the cab and ran around the back of the truck just as Tyler was jumping out of the box. We both looked at each other and asked "is

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Phyllis Tremblay

As I complete my term as President of the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club, I look back with gratitude on the many challenges and accomplishments which we have shared. It has been a true learning experience for me. I appreciate your help.

Thanks to the efforts of our members and the guidance and work provided by our Board of Directors, we have been able to continue to strive towards our aims. We have stimulated interest in nature and made our community more aware of its natural history so that together we have tried our best to preserve wildlife.

We are approaching the Club's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2011 and I'm looking forward to being part of the team that will be planning special events for our celebration.

that what I think it is?" The time was approximately 07:20.

The bird song was that distinctive tst-slick call of a Henslow's Sparrow. We listened for about a minute and determined it was generally in an area to the north of the road. Tyler headed to the west a bit and then north and we triangulated the location based on the song. We finally spotted the bird after about one minute sitting in the top of a bush. The bird sat in the bush for a period of time singing and then flew to another bush.

I set up my spotting scope and we got good looks at the bird and identified it as Henslow's Sparrow based on its chunky shape, large beak and flattish striped head with olive colouring. The bird was fairly light on its breast and did not show the heavier streaking that some of the field guides show.

As the bird seemed to be fairly comfortable with our presence I got my camera from the truck and walked in to try to get closer for some photos. I was able to get within about 6 to 10 metres and got some shots and then the bird flew towards me and dropped into a bush about 2 metres away. I moved towards the bush and was able to see the bird on the ground at the base of the bush less than 1 metre from me. The bird then flew east to another bush about 4 to 5 metres away and I was able to get some more shots. After about a minute the birds flew off to the north and I walked back to the road. The sparrow continued to sing and move between a couple of perches. We continued to observe the sparrow until about 07:50 when we left the location and headed to the west to start our point counts.

After the point counts wrap-up meeting we escorted about 15 or so people who were participating in the point counts into the Windmill Ranch to try and observe the Henslow's Sparrow again. The bird was actively singing and quickly found again and confirmed as a Henslow's Sparrow. All got good looks at the sparrow either through spotting scopes or binoculars. This group included Mark Cranford (OFO), Kyra Howes (Couchiching Conservancy) and Dan Bone (OFO).

#### June 27, 2009 Update

Follow up monitoring by Dan Bone showed the bird to be present on Tuesday June 23. In an email sent to several people on June 25, 2009, Dan reported the following:

*"Henslow's Sparrow: According to the 2001-2005 breeding Bird Atlas this sparrow "... is detected, on average, at only one or two sites per year in Ontario." "No known pairs were reported*

*during the second Atlas but the females are inconspicuous and easily overlooked."*

*"This past Tuesday, June 23, the Henslow's was observed singing in the same habitat we saw it in on June 13. This qualifies it for the lowest level of breeding evidence as per the last BB Atlas (singing male on the same territory at least one week apart). Upon arrival at the habitat on Tuesday, June 23, observers saw two birds at a distance (could not be heard). They flew together (or were chasing each other) They landed on a shrub and one disappeared. The remaining bird was subsequently identified as a Henslow's Sparrow. The bird moved closer and could be heard singing its mighty song. This is very weak and unreliable evidence as the other bird could have been (likely was) a Savannah Sparrow which seems to be breeding in the same area."*

His observations suggested there was the possibility of a second Henslow's Sparrow but he was unable to confirm this. I made arrangements to go onto the Windmill Ranch on Saturday June 27 to monitor the bird if still present. I arrived at the location at about 07:50 and the sparrow was quickly identified by song on the north side of the road and I was able to quickly spot it with binoculars and spotting scope.

Unlike the observations of June 13, 2009, this time the sparrow was moving amongst several different perches in the area, *as if singing from limits of a territory*, emphasis mine. I watched the bird for about 30 minutes as he moved about the area. At one point he was briefly joined by another bird that could have been a second Henslow's Sparrow, however, I was not able to see the second bird long enough nor clearly enough to positively identify it.

I continued to watch the sparrow and did observe a Savanna Sparrow carrying food and perching and looking around carefully before dropping to the ground. Dan Bone had also observed a possible Savanna Sparrow in the area on June 23 and also thought it may be nesting in the area. The observation of this bird with food likely indicates a Savanna Sparrow nest in the area.

Over the next 2 ½ hours I continued to watch the Henslow's Sparrow and on two separate occasions noticed the possible second Henslow's Sparrow

with it but again the looks at the second bird were not sufficient to positively identify it.

At about 10:55 I saw the Henslow's Sparrow and the second bird together again but this time much closer to the road. I played about 10 seconds of Henslow's Sparrow chip call and the two birds came to within about 50 feet of my truck. I was able to positively identify the first bird I had been watching and the second bird as Henslow's Sparrows. I was able to take several images of the two birds together as they sat in bushes about 3 feet apart. The second bird dropped down from sight after about one to two minutes and was not seen again. The male continued his singing from the several perches in the area. I continued to watch the male Henslow's Sparrow until about 12:00 when I left the site during which time he continued to sing.

Based on the field observations and images taken on June 27, 2009, there were two Henslow's Sparrows on the Windmill Ranch property and it is



highly possible the two birds are a nesting pair.

This area will be observed carefully in 2010 to see if Henslow's sparrows return to the Windmill or Cameron Ranches.

**NOTE:** The interior of the Windmill and Cameron Ranches can be accessed only by obtaining special permission. It is not open to general public access.

### **NATURALIST'S NOTES**

#### **GEORGIAN BAY BIRDING GROUP**

Hi Friends: Beautiful sunny day temperature 5C with a slight breeze. Ground snow covered with some small patches of earth and grass stubble showing in the fields. Thanks to Diane for listing our sightings.

Participants: Diane Fletcher, Elizabeth Gillian, Margo Holt, Dave Lord, Beryl Lougher, Jim Tomkins, Phyllis Tremblay also birding buddies Wendy Hutchings and Nancy Ironside.

Locations visited: Ronald, Strongville, McKinnon roads and the east side of the Wetlands.

Number of bird species seen: 24

Canada Goose, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Mourning Dove, Rock Pigeon, Ring-billed Gull, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Blue Jay, American Crow, Northern Shrike, Northern Cardinal, American Goldfinch, Purple Finch, American Tree Sparrow, Snow Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, European Starling, House Sparrow.

Beryl Lougher

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### **BIRDS NESTS**

Recently I was asked about the legality of gathering bird's nests. Not knowing exactly where to look for the answer I approached Alex Mills who researched the subject and found that the *Migratory Bird Act* did indeed have regulations on the subject and forwarded the appropriate section for insertion in the Newsletter.

6. *Subject to subsection 5(9), no person shall (a) disturb, destroy or take a nest, egg, nest shelter, eider duck shelter or duck box of a migratory bird, or (b) have in his possession a live migratory bird, or a carcass, skin, nest or egg of a migratory bird except under authority of a permit therefore.*

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### **GEORGIAN BAY BIRDING GROUP**

Outing #10

Mar. 23/10

Flooded Fields Minesing, Elmvale, Tiny Marsh - March 23, 2010

Hi Friends: A cloudy wet start to our day with temperature 3C with a breeze making the wind chill -2, stayed cloudy with some light showers. The flooded fields we visited had many waterfowl with the exception of the field east of Tiny Marsh which had drained. Lunch was in Elmvale and a walk in Tiny Marsh ended the day.

Participants: Linda Crome, Sid Hadlington, Jennifer Howard, Beryl Lougher, Phyllis Tremblay.

Locations visited: Ronald, Strongville, Floss Roads, the east side of Tiny Marsh and Tiny Marsh.

Number of bird species seen: 39

Pied-billed Grebe, Sandhill Crane (H), Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead Hooded Merganser, Northern Harrier (M), Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Wild Turkey, Killdeer (H), Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Glaucous Gull (3 in Tiny Marsh), Great Black-backed Gull, Mourning Dove, Rock Pigeon, Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, Blue Jay, American Crow, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, European Starling, House Sparrow.

Beryl Lougher

Tick Trefoil, Poison Ivy, Prickly Lettuce, Purple Loosestrife, Ragweed, Red Clover, Red-osier Dogwood, River Grape, Slender Gerardia, Spotted Joe-Pye Weed, Spotted Touch-me-not, Stinging Nettle, Tall Meadow-rue, Thimbleweed, Viper's Bugloss, Virginia Creeper, Water Smartweed, White Snakeroot, White Clover, Wild Bergamot, Wild Carrot, Wild Clematis, Wild Cucumber, Wild Red Raspberry, and Yellow Wood Sorrel.

**Birds Noted:-** Turkey Vulture, Mourning Dove, Northern Flicker, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-winged Blackbird, and Common Grackle.

Phyllis Tremblay

### FIELD TRIP REPORTS

#### North Simcoe Rail Trail Sept.12/09

##### Goldenrods and Asters Along the trail

The brilliant yellow goldenrod and the white, mauve, and purple asters that edge the North Simcoe Rail Trail at this time of the year were the focus of the 4 1/2 hour walk. Bright sunshine and 21C temperatures made this a pleasant late summer field trip for the 9 participants.

To help distinguish between the variety of goldenrod and asters, we used a magnifier to look at the "green zone" on each plant. This is the dark green patch of the chlorophyll on Aster and Goldenrod flower head bracts. The shape of this patch helped to identify them:

**Goldenrods:-** Grass Leaved, Smooth, Canada, Tall and Rough-stemmed.

**Asters:-** Heart Leaved, New England, Purple Stemmed, Flat Topped White and Panicked.

**Additional Plants:-** Annual Sow-thistle, Asparagus, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Black Medic, Boneset, Bouncing Bet, Bull Thistle, Canada Anemone (a few still blooming), Canada Thistle, Catnip, Clammy Ground Cherry, Climbing Nightshade, Common Arrowhead, Common Burdock, Common Buttercup, Common Cat-tail, Common Dandelion, Common Elderberry, Common Milkweed with a tussock tiger caterpillar, Common Mullein, Common Yarrow, Cow Vetch, Curled Dock, Daisy Fleabane, Devil's Beggarticks, Evening Primrose, Eye Bright, Fern:- Ostrich & Sensitive, Field Sow-thistle, Meadow Goat's-beard, Hard-stemmed Bulrush, Highbush Cranberry, Hog-peanut, Horsetweed, Meadow Goat's-beard, Nodding Beggarticks, Ox-Eyed Daisy, Panicked

#### Minesing Raptors

Feb. 13/10

Temperature was -13 at the house at 8:10am. The sun was up but the sky was overcast with the odd snow flake. We met at the Little Lake Parking Lot and we eventually had 14 people and 8 cars – Beryl Lougher joined us at Minesing.

We went our usual route of out through Minesing, Ronald Rd, South Glen Garry Landing Rd, Hwy26 and off on Strongville Rd. were we eventually made our way around to the Brentwood Rd. and into Angus with a welcome stop at the Tim Horton's. From there we went in on Hwy 90 to McKinnon Rd. and down to the old farm for some excellent results as usual, then back out to Hwy 90 and on into Barrie, I turned off and came in on Sunnidale Rd and Dave Lord and I were rewarded with 9 Turkeys at the Harris farm. Upon returning to the parking lot Phyllis Tremblay and several others had spotted two Red-tailed Hawks at the lot and there was a Pileated Wood Pecker enjoying himself at Phyllis's bird feeder just down the road. We had both a juvenile Snowy Owl and a Red-tailed Hawk.

Everyone enjoyed themselves and a couple of the newer members got a few lifers.

**Birds** – Downey (3), Hairy (2) and Pileated (2) and a Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Amer. Crows, Northern Ravens (2), Rough-legged Hawks (4), Snowy Owls (4), Red-tailed Hawk (3), Snow Buntings (100), Tree sparrows, White-bellied Nuthatch, European Starlings, Amer. Goldfinches, Blue Jays, , Dark-eyed Juncos, Morning doves, Rock Pigeons, House Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Purple Finches, Turkeys (9).

Brian Gibbon



**Horned Larks & Pancakes****Mar.20/10**

This is one of our favourite outings. After our drive around the Minesing Wetlands we meet at the Tiffin Conservation area for our pancake & sausage lunch.

For a number of years John and Beth Doll have headed up the cook-out portion of this event with help from a group of able volunteers. John announced last year that 2010 would be his last time as chief organizer and chef. Bruce and Jean Wilson have volunteered to step into the breach and worked with John to "learn the ropes" with able assistance from Linda Crombe (long time helper) and Chris Evans we had another great pancake and sausage lunch including Linda's baked beans.

A big warm thank you to John and Beth for their years of service, John said they are not retiring but just stepping back a bit.

I did my usual bit and acted as guide for the tour around the Wetlands.

The sky was covered in heavy overcast, the wind was cold and from the north-West, at 8:00am the temperature was -2C. We met at the Little Lake parking lot and left at 9:00 am, seven cars and seventeen people, Alex and Peter Mills caught up with us at Minesing bringing the total to eight vehicles and nineteen participants.

There was heavy flooding on the south side of Ronald Rd. also lighter flooding on the north side. The west side of South Glengarry Landing Rd. was also flooded. All the water was an inviting area for the many ducks, geese, gulls, and swans that we observed. We could only go down to the concession road at McKinnon Rd due to flooding.

**BIRDS:** - at the parking lot, Blue Jays, Red-winged Blackbirds, Robins, Crows, Canada Geese and Black-capped Chickadees.

Ronald and Glengarry Landing Rd area, Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, Pintail, Golden-eye, Mallards, Bufflehead Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Widgeons, Ring-billed Gulls, Raven, Morning Doves, Blackbirds, Killdeer, European Starling and an immature Bald Eagle.

Strongville Rd., route, Sandhill Cranes (7), Rock Pigeons, Rough-legged Hawks (pr), Northern Shrike, Hairier (male), Goshawk.

McKinnon Rd, Ring-necked and Bufflehead Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Song Sparrow, House Sparrow were seen.

We heard but did not observe any Horned Larks.

Brian W. Gibbon

**HELEN B. EMERY****A PAST PRESIDENT OF THE BRERETON FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB****September 4, 1922 – March 22, 2010**

Helen B. Emery of Barrie, Ontario passed away at the Grove Park Home in her 88th year.

She was born in Huntsville, Ontario daughter of Herbert Emery and Ethel Maud Havercroft and is survived by cousins Norman Havercroft of Sudbury, Edward Elliotson of Caledon, Stanley Elliotson of Orangeville, Elvira Bogar Havercroft Fisher of Grimsby, Kenneth Havercroft of Winona, and Deborah Havercroft Seamans of Grimsby.

Helen was a teacher for many years at Dan Wagner Beaches Public School in Hamilton. Upon retirement, she lived for a time in Toronto, subsequently taking residency in Barrie. Miss Emery took interest in many things ranging from painting to family history. She loved the outdoors and was an avid bird-watcher. She also taught English, and supported a number of missions. Helen attended Westminster Presbyterian Church, 170 Steel Street, Barrie.

**HELEN AND THE BRERETON FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB.**

Phyllis Tremblay combed through the Minutes of the Clubs meetings back to 1989, and I went through the old Newsletter and we put together this brief history of Helen's activities –

Helen first introduced the Great Tree Hunt in 1990 and became the Chairperson of the Great Tree Hunt Committee in 1991 and 1992 when the Committee changed its name to the Heritage Trees and she chaired the new committee in 1993. The Great Tree Hunt was the Earth Day project on April 25, 1992.

|                 |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1995 – 1996 ... | Past President              |
| 1992 – 1994 ... | President                   |
| 1990 – 1991 ... | Vice President              |
| 1989 – 1991 ... | Membership                  |
| 1987 – 1988 ... | Director, Program Committee |
| 1986 – 1987 ... | “ “ “                       |
| 1985 – 1986 ... | “ “                         |
| 1984 – 1985 ... | Social Committee            |
| 1983 – 1984     | “ “                         |

It would appear from the records that Helen joined the Club in 1982 and obviously did not waste time becoming a very active member

Phyllis Tremblay & Brian Gibbon.

**Tribute to Helen Emery**

In Helen's booklet "Reminiscences of my Childhood", many references are made to her interest in birds and nature from an early age. Growing up in Huntsville, where her father was Station Agent, gave her many areas to pursue her interest in the outdoors.

Helen's vocabulary did not include the words "thereabouts, approximately, or around" to mention approximately a few. While President, meetings began at "precisely, exactly, or on the dot of 7:30. To ensure this, Helen would don a railway cap and blow a whistle at exactly, or thereabouts, 7:28, to summon all to order for the exact start at 7:30. Being a former school teacher gave her a great sense of timing, as well as a sense of humour.

On several occasions I spent a few days with her at her cottage in Huntsville. She would drive her antique car there and back. I was privileged to have had a ride in it to Arrowhead Provincial Park for a day of birding. A Chestnut-sided Warbler perched very near us to make sure we had a close-up view of him. Three highlights of that day where, the car ride, view of the bird and being with Helen.

Fondly remembered by Gwen Scott

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Helen, a keen naturalist, impressed me with her diligent examination of plants, often referring to a field guide before identifying the species.

One of the favourite memories of Helen occurred on a BFN field trip to Tiffin Conservation Centre. We came upon a plant that was new to me, but familiar to Helen ... "Oh that's Pipsissewa!" (Chimaphila umbellata), and quickly showed us the description in the field guide. Helen's readiness to help others learn more about nature has left a lasting impression on many members.

Phyllis Tremblay

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I followed Helen as President only having been in the Club for about two years, the year prior to her last term Helen and Don Scanlon approached me and put the pressure on to run as vice-president. Helen assured me, with a smile that it was merely to fill the position, no big deal. I asked if she was staying on as President (thinking a few more years) and she assured me not to worry that she would be around for sometime. Well, guess what - next year I was President, her railroading background had come into play that time.

Helen seemed to really enjoy the walk I led down in the Valley near our house and always came out for it as long as she could – even after I got turned around one year and led everyone on a wide looping walk. She was so pleased to find

Deptford Pinks growing on the edge of the field and sought them out every year. There is a long steep hill at the beginning/end of the walk as those of you that have been out will recall. The last few outings I was concerned about Helen climbing that hill which did not have good footing. I would stop a couple of times going back up the hill and engage Helen in conversation in order to allow her a short rest, while one day she looked at me with that twinkle in her eye and asked if I was having problems, if so she would wait with me until I got my breath. She saw right through my little ruse.

Brian W. Gibbon

**EDITOR'S THOUGHTS**

It is very heartening to see several new members stepping up and becoming active on the Executive. Many hands make for lighter work – Thanks go out to Bruce Wilson for volunteering to fill the Vice-President's vacant position and is now our incoming President, Jean Wilson for stepping in as Social Convener, Rob Cook for taking on the CD project and Pat Duncan for heading up the Blue Bird project just to name a few.

Those of us serving on the Board do so because we enjoy it and want to preserve and enhance the BFN, but we do get tired after awhile. I noticed that when I was researching Helen Emery's involvement that the name of our outgoing President Phyllis Tremblay was showing up on committees back in the late 80s and early 90s and she has been associated with one or another function in the Club ever since – I guess that is why she was so emphatic about saying that this was definitely the end of her term.

Researching back through the old Newsletters reveal that the Club has always had a group of individuals that served in various capacities for many years and it is to them we owe thanks for preserving the BFN for our enjoyment. None of the positions require years of experience before taking them on, nearly all of us have naively jumped in and swam successfully with the job so why don't you join us?

Thank you Phyllis for your years of service, you can now devote your time to the pursuit of the Chimney Swifts. (See you just can not entirely let go).

Brian W. Gibbon

**2009 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Alex Mills coordinated this years Count and even though the weather was co-operative most of us

had to really dig to get our lists and overall we came up short of last years (see the attached listings).

The Count was followed by a great Pot-Luck Supper organized by Linda Crome and her helpers. A dinner like that is a great way to top off a day of being out in the cold chasing our feathered friends.

Thanks to everyone who participated and especially our organizers, without whose hard work anything would have happened.

### **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PARTICIPANTS**

- Area 1 – Lyn Pope – Volker Brinkmann, Erin Rainville, Linda Crome.
- Area 2 – John Doll – Phyllis Tremblay, Elizabeth Gillan.
- Area 3 – Alan McNair – Bob Mayes, Nathan Beaulne, Kelly Roussy
- Area 4 – David Lord – Morris Gervais, Anthony Taliana, Dave Nicholls.
- Area 5 – Don Scanlon – Alex Mills, Sylvia Mills, Dave and Judy Adams, Beryl Lougher
- Area 6 – Dave Fewster – Wayne Simkin, Chris Ballantine
- Area 7 – Jim Spruce – Mike Spruce, Jonathan and Larry Roe, Brian Gibbon.
- Area 8 – Scott Watson – Barry Watson, Rob Cook, Pat Duncan
- Area 9 – Nigel Shaw – Bruce Wilson, Wade Hodgson.

### **The BFNC Eastern Bluebird Trail Project**

#### **The Eastern Bluebird**

*The Eastern Bluebird is an early migrant. The male Bluebird arrives early to seek and establish its territory. It then looks for and calls in its female mate. An early male Bluebird was observed near the Tangle Creek Golf Course on March 20<sup>th</sup> this year.*



*Eastern Bluebird habitat is open rural fields with low or sparse ground cover. Suitable habitat includes perch sites such as fence rows, wires or tree branches where bluebirds may perch to search for food (insects).*

*Bluebirds usually have two broods per season, but under ideal conditions (an early warm spring) can have up to three broods. On average 4-6 eggs are laid per clutch. Once incubation begins the eggs must be warmed to at least 98° F. If the*

*inside of the nesting box gets too warm, the eggs will die.*

*Other birds such as Tree Swallows; House Sparrows and House Wrens are also cavity nesters and often take over Bluebird nest boxes. House Sparrows are very aggressive and will actually destroy Bluebird eggs and kill young to take over the nest.*

*Bluebirds are tolerant of people thus allowing the opening and monitoring of boxes without stressing the birds.*

The Tangle Creek Bluebird trail was established by the BFNC in 1992 and consisted of 50 Bluebird boxes located along County Road 25 and the 11<sup>th</sup> Line of Essa Township. At that time there were 10 Bluebirds nests, 26 Tree Swallow nests and 10 House Sparrows nests. The area is open, rolling pasture land and includes the Tangle Creek golf course – both types of terrain favoured by Bluebirds. The following report was provided by James Forrest to the BFNC and the Eastern Bluebird Society in 1993:

*“Our second year has come and gone for the Brereton Bluebird Nest Box Programme. Our success rate from 1992 was a 23% increase in Tree Swallow fledglings. Unfortunately, Eastern Bluebird success was down 31 percent compared to last year. An increase in House Sparrows on the trail have caused Eastern Bluebird and Tree Swallow problems. Numerous times, Don Scanlan and I have had to clear House Sparrow nests from boxes of nesting Swallows and Bluebirds. House Sparrows have also destroyed eggs and young of these birds. More monitoring is needed to the 1994 season if Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows are to have breeding success. This year several birds were banded by Alex Mills and Nigel Shaw. Hopefully, these banded birds will return next year so we may monitor their success.”*

At the February 2010 BFNC meeting it was decided to actively rehabilitate and re-establish the Tangle Creek trail and establish a new trail in





Springwater Township near Sunnidale Road as a Club project. Following a report in the October 2009 'Blue Heron' newsletter (Bluebird Box Report) considerable progress has been made by BFNC members in re-establishing the Tangle Creek Bluebird trail for 2010. The report established that the trail had fallen into disrepair although BFNC members had continued to clean the boxes and undertake periodic observations of nesting activity. At the February meeting a number of Club members showed interest in working on both projects. In late February of this year an inventory of the location and condition of existing Bluebird boxes at Tangle Creek was undertaken by BFNC members. A report was prepared and confirmed that many boxes were damaged or rotten and in need of various levels of repair. The inventory identified 24 boxes remaining from the original 50. Of the 24 boxes, 5 were beyond repair and the balance were refurbished as needed with new wood and locking screws.



With donations from Club members, 15 new nesting boxes were constructed by St. Joseph's High School woodworking shop students under the guidance of their teacher. These new boxes are a new design called the 'Croker' style. The

design has demonstrated a 65% higher fledging rate and is currently being used by the Orillia Naturalists Club. The box design is longer and narrower with an internal division that places the nest toward the back of the box thereby reducing exposure to predators. It was decided to use 10 of the new boxes to establish the new trail in Springwater Township with the remaining five to be added to the Tangle Creek Trail.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, BFNC volunteers began the re-establishment of the Tangle Creek trail by relocating and pairing all 24 nesting boxes. Recent studies show an increased success rate if the nesting boxes are placed in pairs. Tree swallows are territorial and will defend both boxes from other



swallows, but they will defend only the box they are actually nesting in from other species, leaving the other box available for Bluebirds. This pairing will hopefully reduce the overall usage by other birds and increase Bluebird occupancy.

In total 12 nesting box pairs (24 boxes) are in place on County Road 25 and the 11<sup>th</sup> Line of Essa Township. BFNC volunteers have been assigned specific nesting boxes to monitor throughout the breeding season. Detailed records of breeding success will be kept and reported to the Club and the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society.

Following the 2010 breeding season additional nesting box repairs or replacement will be carried out and consideration will be given to expanding the trail with the addition of new nesting boxes. We will also hopefully be able to confirm the effectiveness of the new Croker design for future use.



Pat Duncan  
Bluebird Project Coordinator  
Photos Pat Duncan