

SHENANDOAH AUDUBON/BLANDY BLUEBIRD TRAIL
2010 SEASON REPORT
by Kaycee Lichliter

Thirty-seven trained trail technicians logged a total 680 volunteer hours during the 2010 season with the Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail located at the Virginia State Arboretum in Clarke County, Virginia. Six technicians were new to the project, all others were seasoned veterans. Trail technicians are listed at the end of this report along with their documented hours.

The trail project offers seven years of consistently collected data to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Virginia Bluebird Society and to Mr. Roger Clapp, Museum Specialist with the Smithsonian Institute. Due to extreme weather conditions (a wet, cool spring and prolonged summer heat), along with limited volunteer bander availability, the Virginia Bluebird Society color-banding project was waived for the season.

Seven-year fledge totals (2004-2010) were: Eastern Bluebirds 1,164; Tree Swallows 1,541; House Wrens 1,255; and Carolina Chickadee 23 for a total 3,983 fledglings. Nesting success for 2010 was: Eastern Bluebirds 72.4%; Tree Swallows 71.4%; House Wrens 76.3% and Carolina Chickadees 77.8%. Four boxes on the 110-nestbox trail remained empty for the season; all other boxes had at least one nesting attempt by Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows or House Wrens. The first Bluebird egg of the season was discovered on April 7, same date as last season.

Heavy snow in February with prolonged ground cover resulted in meadow voles creating “runways and haystacks” beneath the snow. When the snow melted, predators (mainly hawks) had a „feast“ in the Tuleyries and Kestrel Knob trail sections. During the annual March box inspection and maintenance, many remains of voles and birds were noted on the nest box tops. This phenomenon may have influenced the resultant lowest number of nesting attempts for Eastern Bluebirds on the trail system since 2004. See the „Data Comparison for Years 2004-2010“ report for detailed information.

A late February box inspection revealed much needed work across the entire trail system. Mr. Glenny Comer picked up the list of needs and promptly built and replaced five boxes, replaced two posts, refurbished several boxes including the roof tops of some 18 boxes, repaired predator guards and updated other hardware. Mr. Comer and Ms. Lichliter visited the carpentry shop of Mr. Ted Saunders and Ms. Kelly Compher where the four constructed ten new Cypress nest boxes. In early March, Ms. Margaret Wester, Ms. Diane Greco, Ms. Missy Buckley, Mr. Don Buckley, Ms. Kelley Compher, Mr. Glenny Comer and Ms. Kaycee Lichliter worked to clean out all nest boxes.

On March 18, Ms. Lichliter conducted a workshop for the six new trail technicians followed by a March 27 Refresher Workshop and Breakfast for all trail technicians. Trail monitoring started on the 27th after the workshop to kick off the season. That same afternoon two Wood Duck boxes constructed by Mr. Ted Saunders were placed at Lake Arnold by Mr. Saunders, Ms. Kelly Compher, Mr. Glenny Comer, Ms. Jeannie Senter and Ms. Kaycee Lichliter. Being as the day was not all ready busy enough, that same team visited the Purple

Martin (PUMA) colony on Blandy premises inspecting the boxes and forming plans to restore/monitor the colony. Shenandoah Audubon purchased a new PUMA house and it was erected by Mr. Comer and Ms. Lichliter later in the season. A PUMA house retrieved from the Abram"s Creek Wetland area has been restored by Mr. Comer and is scheduled to be added to the colony at Blandy before the 2011 PUMA birds return.

On March 29, 2010, Mr. Comer and Ms. Lichliter provided training to the staff and boys at Timber Ridge School for operations on the Greg Baruffi Bluebird Trail located on the school premises on behalf of Shenandoah Audubon.

Ms. Lichliter is working to record the GPS locations of each box in the trail system for future reference purposes.

The trail system is funded by Shenandoah Audubon along with a few unsolicited private donations. Trail expenses while under the management of Ms. Lichliter to date are: 2004 = \$400; 2005 = \$555; 2006 = \$675; 2007: \$300; 2008 = \$500; 2009 = \$508; 2010 = \$400 for a grand total of \$3,338. (Interestingly, that calculates out to \$1.19 per fledging.)

On a very sad note, trail technician Ms. Wendy Robinson Fowler passed on August 20. Ms. Fowler was very enthusiastic and dedicated to birds in general, particularly to the Blandy trail system, and especially to Box 105. In early 2011 a plaque will be placed on Box 105 in memory of Ms. Fowler. We miss Ms. Fowler"s kind and fun-loving presence.

The 2011 Workshop for new recruits only will be held Wednesday, March 9 from 7 to 9 p.m. The 2011 Workshop-Annual Meeting and covered dish for all trail participants will be held Saturday, March 12 from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. Both events will be held at the Blandy Library and prior registration for the functions to Ms. Lichliter is required.

THANK YOU, to all the trail participants and to those who support us. If you are interested in participating with the Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail or want to reserve your space in an upcoming workshop, please contact Ms. Kaycee Lichliter, Trail Manager, at kayceelichliter@hotmail.com or call Blandy Experimental Farm at 837-1758.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaycee Lichliter

Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail Manager
Shenandoah Audubon Conservation Chair

Attachments:

Volunteer Names and Hours

Data Comparison Tables