

SHENANDOAH AUDUBON/BLANDY BLUEBIRD TRAIL 2011 SEASON REPORT

by Kaycee Lichliter

44 dedicated trail technicians completed the 8th consecutive year of recording consistent breeding data on the 110 nest box Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail (SA/BBT) during 2011. Approximately 400 volunteer hours were donated in order to submit a Citizen Science contribution to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Virginia Bluebird Society, the North American Bluebird Society and the USGS Bird Banding Lab.

Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail technicians earned special recognition from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Nest Watch Program for placing 9th in the Top 20 Nest Watch All-Stars in the United States. Data was submitted for 197 nesting attempts in the 2011 season.

Trail data indicates our bluebirds are recovering from the heavy 2010 snows which produced prolonged ground cover, one of the suspected variables for the local population crash. In 2009 we celebrated 205 new bluebirds, whereas the population fell to just 97 fledglings after the snowstorms. The 2011 season showed a partial recovery with 154 fledglings; almost back up to our eight-season average of 165 fledglings per year. Tree Swallows had an impressive year increasing from 309 fledglings in 2010 to 384 fledglings. It is interesting to note that Tree Swallows did not experience a population decrease after the 2010 snows. Tree Swallow numbers have increased each year since 2007. House Wrens decreased slightly from 216 fledglings in 2010 to 204 new birds this past season. House Wrens also did not show a decline due to the 2010 heavy snows and actually increased from 196 to 216. Since 2004, the SA/BBT has provided nesting habitat and recorded detailed breeding information for the following number of fledglings: bluebirds 1,318; Tree Swallows 1,925; House Wrens 1,459 and Carolina Chickadees 23 for a total 4,725 new sets of wings to take to the air. To view Data Comparisons for Years 2004 – 2011, please visit audubon-nsvs.org and click on the 'Bluebird Trail' tab on the menu bar.

Thank you to all trail technicians and those who support us! If you are interested in participating with the Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail, reserve your space in the upcoming trail technician workshop by contacting Ms. Kaycee Lichliter, Trail Manager, at kayceelichliter@hotmail.com or by calling Blandy Experimental Farm at (540) 837-1758. Training is free, but pre-registration is required.