

EASTERN BLUEBIRDS NESTING AT INDIAN HEAD

by **Lorne Scott**, Indian Head

I started building bird houses in the spring of 1963. I made 16 houses that year, some from boards and some out of hollow trees. I placed these around the farm yard and all were occupied by House Sparrows.

In 1964 I built another 26 houses. These were placed around the farm yard and a few in the fields. In addition to the House Sparrows, I had six families of House Wrens that year. That summer I found a pair of Mountain Bluebirds nesting in a natural hollow tree in a bluff in the field, and resolved to entice some Mountain Bluebirds into my houses the next year.

In 1965 I added another 34 houses. Most of these I attached to trees in bluffs in the fields, but six I placed on fence posts in the open fields. The latter were most successful, as three were occupied by Mountain Bluebirds and one by Tree Swallows. The swallows and one pair of bluebirds raised their young successfully.

During the last winter I made another 74 houses to bring my total to 150, all made from hollow trees, and I placed these on fence posts and power poles in the fields before May 1. Most thrilling and unexpected were the two pairs of Eastern Bluebirds, a species that has not been known to nest in Saskatchewan for many years. One nest had five eggs and the other had four eggs. A total of eight young were fledged from the two nests. Ten boxes were occupied by Mountain Bluebirds and 40 young were raised in the eight successful nests. All 17 Tree Swallow nests were successful, with 94 young raised. One pair of Yellow-shafted Flickers raised six young in one of my boxes. Twenty-four pairs of House Wrens raised about 125 young.

I make most of my bird houses from hollow trees or dead trees whose centre is rotten and easy to remove. Each suitable tree is cut off at the ground, brought home and sawed into



Lorne Scott and nest-box

Photo by Robert R. Taylor

blocks about 10 inches long. Thus I get from six to 10 houses from one tree. A notch an inch and a half wide and an inch and half deep is cut out at one end; when a board is nailed over this end, this becomes the entrance hole. Two drainage holes are drilled in the board applied over the other end, and this forms the floor.

The houses are placed at least 300 yards apart, on poles five or six feet from the ground. The entrance holes face east or south, away from prevailing winds. Each house is wired to the post, and further secured by two nails driven obliquely through the back of the house into the post.

This summer I have put up another 50 houses, so that 200 will be in readiness for next spring. I have a record of each house, including its location, the species using it, number of eggs, number of young raised, complete with the date of its erection and each occurrence thereafter.

I am still waiting for Purple Mar-

tins. Last winter I built a 28-room martin house, which I placed on the windmill in our yard. Purple Martins visited it off and on throughout June but did not stay to nest. I hope they will take up residence next year.

EASTERN BLUEBIRDS

by David N. Ashdown, Okla

A pair of Eastern Bluebirds nested this year (1966) at Okla, 40 miles northwest of Yorkton. Their home was a bird box of rough lumber placed in an aspen poplar at the edge of a pasture three miles south of the town. The nest was found on June 6, and observed to have two eggs on June 10 and five eggs on June 13. It was visited by Dr. Stuart Houston on June 20 when the female was lifted from the nest box and banded. The five young were raised successfully and were last seen on July 13. Nearby a Mountain Bluebird successfully raised six young, these birds being only a few days old at the time of Dr. Houston's visit on June 20.

AFTER 50 YEARS, THE EASTERN BLUEBIRD NESTS AGAIN AT REGINA

by Margaret Belcher, 2601 Winnipeg St., Regina

Fifty years ago people who talked about bluebirds in Regina appear to have meant Eastern Bluebirds. At least, the bluebird that Mitchell saw raising two broods in Regina in 1916 is known to have been of this species (Belcher, 1961). On the other hand, for the 20 years that I have been in Regina, our bluebirds have been Mountain Bluebirds, seen commonly in migration and nesting just beyond the Regina area as one goes north to the Qu'Appelle Valley through country sprinkled with aspen groves. Indeed, we have come to recognize the Mountain Bluebird as the common breeding bluebird of Saskatchewan and to think of the Eastern Bluebird as rare, except for occasional observations in spring and fall migration. Obviously some changes have taken place over the years in the status of these birds, and it is interesting to go back to early accounts to see whether

we can trace any pattern of occurrence.

Mitchell (1924) described the Eastern Bluebird (*Siala sialis*) as a "fairly common summer visitant locally through transition zone, found breeding in Cypress Hills and Moose Mountain and northward to Hudson Bay Junction." There is no suggestion in this statement that the Eastern Bluebird was to be expected only in the eastern part of the province, and he further comments in reference to the Mountain Bluebird that the range of the two species overlaps.

Further particulars of the Cypress Hills records referred to by Mitchell are supplied by Godfrey (1950) who tells that Laurence Potter had a pair breeding at Eastend in 1922 and reported the appearance of an additional pair in 1923 that did not nest. In 1943, however, Potter wrote that the bird was then an irregular and un-