

She has just a few nest boxes around her farm, four mi South of Stettler. When Tree Swallows took possession of house No. 7, several birds were seen flying around it. The first egg was found on 15 May. On 30 May there were 13 eggs, with two hens brooding them. Both hens flew. On 12 June, one hen flew out as Grace looked in. The other one was lifted, the eggs counted and the hen put back down on the nest. She stayed there! On 15 June, when Lloyd Lohr came along to see the nest, the eggs were hatching. Lloyd noted then that there was only one male bird near, and concluded that here was a case of polygamy. A few days later three infertile eggs were removed from the nest and the ten young birds left alone for quite

some time. When the house was next checked there were the remains of two nearly fully grown birds. The rest, presumably, had flown.

Inquiries revealed that Blake Stillings of Calgary encountered a case in 1978, the first year he started his bluebird trail, where 9 tree swallow young had fledged from a single nest. There were two hens on the nest brooding 9 eggs and a male nearby, suggesting polygamy. Although Blake has built his trail to over 300 boxes, a similar situation hasn't appeared since.

The authors would be interested in learning if others have run across similar double brood situations.

## EFFECTS OF A LATE MAY SNOW-STORM ON MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD AND TREE SWALLOW NESTING

MARY I. HOUSTON, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: S7N 0J8

Each April, with the help of willing assistants, I check the 240 boxes on the actively maintained section of the Saskatoon Junior Natural History Society's Bluebird Trail within 60 km of Saskatoon. Damaged boxes are repaired or replaced to be ready for occupancy by the returning Mountain Bluebirds.

Banding of young Mountain Bluebirds usually gets underway in late May. For example, in 1980 I banded young at 8 nests on 27 May, and at 16 nests on 29 May, continuing on throughout the summer with second nestings in 27 of the 59 boxes used by bluebirds. The last young were banded on 17 July. In a total of 84 nestings, 324 young bluebirds were banded.

In 1981, young from 13 nests were banded on 30 May and those from another 20 nests on 31 May. The last young bluebirds were banded on 21 July. A total of 71 boxes was used by bluebirds and 36 were used for second nestings, for an overall total of 107 nestings and 355 young banded.

In contrast, the 1982 nesting statistics were very different, due largely to the disturbance caused by the unseasonably heavy snowfall (15.4 cm) on 28 May and the subsequent cold days without apparent insects for food. Only 2 bluebird nests survived the storm, with the first bluebird brood of 4 young banded on 7 June, and a second brood of 6 on 16 June. Even these clutches were 1 and 2 weeks late, compared to

1980 and 1981. It was 25 June before bluebirds raised from eggs laid after the storm were ready for banding, nearly 4 weeks late. The peak bluebird banding day for the entire summer on 29 June involved only 5 broods. Fifty-six boxes were used by bluebirds (only 4 had second nestings), for a total of 60 nestings. Only 132 bluebird nestlings were fledged — barely more than a third of the usual number.

Not only were there many fewer nestings, but the success rate was low in 1982. Of the 56 boxes, only 30 fledged young. The average number of young produced per occupied nest was in 1980 3.9, in 1981 3.3, and in 1982 only 2.2.

Tree Swallows normally nest about 3 weeks later than Mountain Bluebirds. The swallows, too, seemed to have been delayed by the inclement weather. All swallows that were just starting to nest before the snowstorm abandoned their attempts and started over again later. Some boxes checked on 7 and 8 June had 2 and 3 eggs, while others had not yet been occupied. The earliest swallow brood had tiny young barely large enough to hold bands on 24 June, and the next broods were banded on 28 and 29 June, about 9 days later than in 1981. Swallow banding did not hit its peak until 9 July. The last swallow banding was on 29 July — 8 days later than in 1981. Although delayed, swallows fledged more young per nest in 1982; 115 nestings yielded 466 young averaging 4.1 young per nest, compared to 143 nestings and 434 young averaging 3.0 young per nest in 1981.

The overall box occupancy rate in 1982, including all species, was 76.3%, compared to 96.3% in 1980 and 92.9% in 1981. The number of boxes totally unused in 1982, 57, was much the highest figure since the trail was begun in 1969.



*Mountain Bluebird*

*Robert J. Long*

## 1982 SASKATCHEWAN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

From Saturday, 18 December 1982 to Sunday, 2 January 1983, inclusive. Count area should be a circle, 24 km (15 miles) in diameter. This year, bird count forms will be sent to all compilers who submitted counts for Christmas 1981. Anyone else who wishes to send in a count, please write for a form to: Mary I. Houston, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7N 0J8.

Reports of counts should be sent to Mary Houston as soon as possible after they are taken (by 10 January 1983 at the very latest).