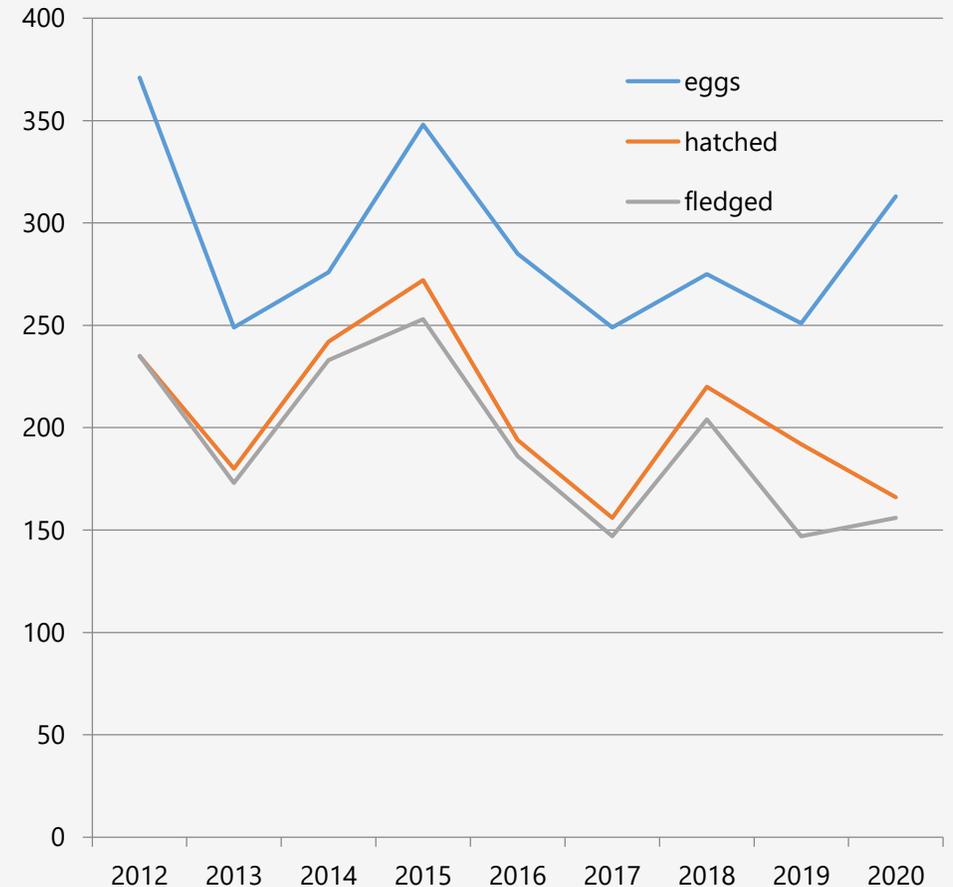


Bluebirds at Turkey Creek 2020

- As in the past few years, first nests were delayed by cold in April and May. Later nests were full-sized, 4-5 and two 6-egg nests. Kaylee and Logan McIntire monitored the west trail, Ron and Linda Ferring monitored the east trail. COVID kept two other volunteers away this year. We maintained social distance and Mary Lou provided antiseptic spray for the vehicle.
- Eggs laid (313 in 83 boxes) made us happy, but only 166 hatched because of predation. Fortunately almost all of these fledged successfully. When a bird of a different species nests in a box, we encourage them: tree swallows, chickadees and great crested flycatchers have occasionally co-existed with bluebirds on our trails. In 2020 we hosted one nest of 5 tree swallows. Also 156 bluebirds.
- House wrens, however, destroy nests of other species in their territories. House wren competition has been increasing on our trails, as can happen after a few years in the same area. We can remove sticks placed by wrens, but laws prohibit damaging a nest if eggs are present.
- In March 2021 we moved 11 boxes that had had **no bluebird nests for the past 3 years**. They form a new Deer Creek trail on the south side of County Road 38. The number of boxes will be the same as in 2020 but we hope the new trail will fledge more bluebirds.



Turkey Creek volunteers - other bird projects

- In 2020 we began to enter our bluebird box data on the national site Nestwatch.com and will again this year. Our data is then available to researchers and other interested observers.
- We continue to report our data to Bluebirds Across Nebraska.
- We monitor bluebirds, nuthatches and chickadees for Climate Watch, another national study by the Audubon Society.
- An Audubon Christmas Bird Count in December, 2020, included ten counters working individually, because of Covid restrictions. Only 4 of us counted at Turkey Creek but we identified nearly the same number of species as usual during the one-day count, 42 species for our County group. (I failed to separate out how many were at Turkey Creek.)
- And then there was the story of the Sandhill Crane that frequented Turkey Creek Preserve during the week of our Christmas Count. Nebraska Wildlife Rehab had released her to migrate with other cranes after healing an injury. The crane decided to hang out with the turkeys a little longer.



Wanted: Volunteer Backup Team

- We are seeking a backup team who will become familiar with trails and substitute for box monitor teams when summer schedules conflict. Mid-May through mid-August.
- **Goal:** to close the gap that allows house wrens to monopolize bluebird boxes, with negative impact on other nesting birds.
- **Time required:** about 2 ½ hours during one or two weeks to be determined as the summer goes along. We will give about a week's advance notice and the backup team can determine exactly what day and hours they can visit the trail. The day would match the ongoing monitor schedule as much as possible.
- **Training:** at least one person on the team must be trained (by existing trail monitors early this season) in bluebird monitoring procedures and box locations.
- **Driver:** at least one person would need to know how to drive Mary Lou's utility vehicle.

Contact Linda at ronandlinda22@gmail.com

