

ASC Greenway Breeding bird monitoring - Final Report, 2015

Thirty-seven nesting sites on the Greenway were monitored in 2015, nine more than the previous year. Thirty-one sites were used at least once during the nesting season. The sites are in the same general locations as last year: near the Nature Center, along the edges of pastures near the Dairy Barn and the orchards near Springfield, and in the area of the Field Trial barn and the Adventure Center. Data were again reported electronically to NestWatch, at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Detailed data are available in my Excel files.¹

We had more active nest sites this year and fledged about the same number of birds as the past 16 past years. The main difference is that we had successful fledging of a more diverse bird population. The highlight was a successful nesting of a pair of brown-headed nuthatches, a species of concern in the Carolinas.

Following are some comments based on the data for 2015.

Last year I reported that we made a concerted effort to provide nesting sites for brown-headed nuthatches after publicity that they were a species of concern. We converted several nest boxes by placing 1" restrictors on the holes of 5 boxes, making them too small for bluebirds to enter. Despite our efforts to "customize" homes for nuthatches, our one successful nesting of nuthatches was from a box that had not been modified! Other species that used our boxes included four successful nestings of Carolina chickadees and a brood of 4 Carolina wrens. Eastern phoebes and tufted titmouse nests were also monitored but no young fledged, either due to predators or infertile eggs.

Predators took a bigger toll on bluebird nests this year than in the past. More bluebird eggs were laid this year than in most of the last 10 years but only 100 eggs hatched, the fewest since 2009. While bluebirds are not endangered on the Greenway, we may want to consider installing predator guards on selected nestbox sites.

Nest boxes were regularly monitored from March through August, usually every 4 – 5 days. The earliest bluebird eggs were laid on March 30, 2015 with several other nest boxes having eggs in the first week of April. The first bluebirds fledged in mid-April though actual fledging is seldom seen. Nesting continued through July and the last birds fledged as late as August 21.

Several boxes were unused in 2015, probably due to changes in the environment immediately around the box site. The peach orchard at the Field Trial barn had been cut down and vegetation is encroaching on several other sites. These boxes will be moved to sites that hopefully will prove more suitable for attracting birds in 2016. In addition, several boxes are in need of repair or replacement.

¹ See Excel spreadsheet: breedingSummary 2015.xlsx

I was pleased and thankful to have help from Tom Anderson and John Marklewitz, both graduates of the Greenway's Master Naturalist class, in 2015. We hope to continue our collaboration.

Readers of this report who are interested in more data on our nest sites and others in the Carolinas and around the US are invited to visit the NestWatch website, nestwatch.org (you will need to create an account to see data).

Table I. Summary of Bluebird Box Monitoring, 1999 – 2013

Year	No. of boxes	Bluebird eggs laid	Bluebird eggs hatched	Bluebirds Fledged	Eggs of other species	Number Fledged	Total No. of eggs	Total fledged
1999	22	50	(2)	14			50	14
2000	27	87	(2)	64			87	64
2001	24	131	(2)	68			131	68
2002	24	156	(2)	55-58			156	55-58
2003	23	142	(2)	65			142	65
2004	24	135	(2)	74			135	74
2005	35	157	(2)	66			157	66
2006	30	182	(2)	82-89			182	82-89
2007	32	236	(2)	93			236	93
2008	33 ¹	199	110	79	18	9	217	88
2009	33 ¹	182	80	56	15	13	197	69
2010	29 ¹	198	118	92	18	13	216	105
2011	28	164	116	93	36	15	200	108
2012	29	243	144	130	32	17	275	147
2013	31	180	117	85	13	0	193	85
2014	27	188	134	100	25	0	213	100
2015	31	194	100	78	42	20	236	98

1. 8 boxes were inactive (unused throughout the season)

2. Data not tabulated