FOCUS ON CITIZEN SCIENCE • VOL 12, NO 1

NestWatch Digest

NESTING SEASON 2015

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Welcome to the first edition of *NestWatch Digest*, featuring NestWatch data highlights from 2015. We are very excited to bring you this report and hope that it will be an informative and interesting resource for NestWatch participants. In this inaugural edition, you'll find everything from science updates to beautiful photos and human interest stories from participants like you. There are even a few links to interactive online content.

This publication is for you, and we welcome your constructive feedback. Please send any comments to **nestwatch@cornell.edu**, and we'll be sure to consider it for next year's edition.

As always, thank you for all that you do. in helping us and others better understand nesting biology. We received 13 requests for data in 2015. Whether this is your first year contributing, or you're a seasoned veteran, we couldn't do what we do without you!

Cover: Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Jim Figlar
Below: Brown Thrasher by David Guerra
Above right: Gambel's Quail by Heather Larson

Focus on Citizen Science is a publication highlighting the contributions of citizen scientists. This issue, *NestWatch Digest 2015*, is brought to you by Nestwatch, a research and education project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The NestWatch project is made possible by the efforts and support of thousands of citizen scientists.

Editorial Staff

Robyn Bailey
Project Leader and Editor

Janis Dickinson
Director of Citizen Science

David Bonter
Assistant Director of Citizen Science

Chelsea Benson
Project Assistant

Wes Hochachka
Senior Research Associate

Anne Marie Johnson
Design Assistant

Diane Tessaglia-Hymes
Design Director

Join NestWatch!

Anyone, anywhere, who finds a nest is welcome to join. Help scientists monitor nesting birds while you support bird conservation in your own community. To join, visit **NestWatch.org** and get certified as a nest monitor. Certification is free and ensures that nest monitoring activities follow our code of conduct designed to protect birds and their nests.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, NY 14850
1-800-843-BIRD
nestwatch@cornell.edu
nestwatch.org

Introducing the bulk import tool

A NestWatch game-changer

BY CHELSEA BENSON, PROJECT ASSISTANT

The year 2015 marked an important development for NestWatch: the creation and implementation of a tool to upload massive amounts of data all at once. The impetus to create the bulk import tool came from Rachel Reklau of the **Forest Preserve District of DuPage County** (Illinois). Rachel needed a way to upload a data set, spanning 14 years and 3,769 nest records. With the bulk import tool, NestWatch uploaded those thousands of nest records on a single spreadsheet. The tool is designed to be useful for researchers, wildlife refuges, conservation organizations, and others who maintain large nesting data sets, but do not have the time or resources to enter them into our permanent, open-access database.

The new tool has been a tremendous success. In addition to the initial data set from Rachel Reklau, we have been able to add another 20,043 records with the help of Dick Blaine and Lee Pauser of the **California Bluebird Recovery Program** (CBRP). Dick Blaine, CBRP director, approached NestWatch with a six-year data set from 2006–2011 which included two dozen species and 17,914 nest records. Lee Pauser, active CBRP member and volunteer for the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's Cavity Nesters Recovery Program, added another 2,129 nest records. Lee's records spanned 14 years, featured 18 species, and provided excellent coverage of the San Francisco Bay area.

In a single year, using the bulk import tool, NestWatch added 23,812 nest records to our free online database. The records are an invaluable asset to the scientific community. If you or someone you know has old nest records that have not been permanently archived elsewhere, get in touch with us to put those records to good use.

Photo by Valerie Baldwin

Lee Pauser with a rescued Barn Owl, one of many species whose nesting records were uploaded to our database.

Common Loon by Grace Donald

Your legacy for birds

Our goal is to gather data for research and conservation focused on nesting birds. By contributing data to NestWatch, you are leaving a lasting legacy. Your financial support, of any amount, will also help us expand the program and reach even more potential participants. Your gift to NestWatch will further our work to capture historic nesting data through our bulk import tool, strengthen our youth learning initiatives, and extend our geographic reach. Thank you for your support! You can donate online here: **https://goo.gl/MTkD03**.

Bluebirds right on track in 2015

BY ROBYN BAILEY, PROJECT LEADER

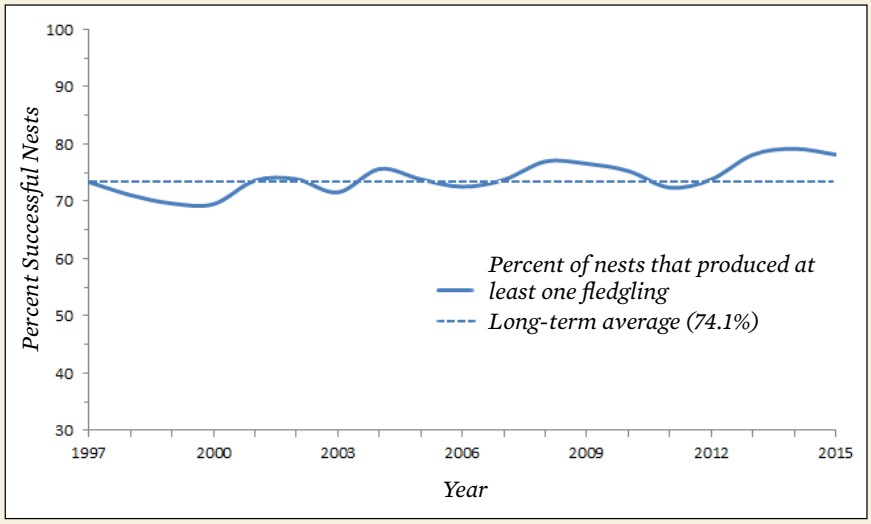
NestWatchers often ask, "Was it a good year for bluebirds?" Answering questions like this would not be possible without the power of citizen science. Thanks to thousands of NestWatchers throughout the years, we were able to use more than 85,000 nest records to compare trends for all three species of bluebird across their ranges.

We are happy to report that in 2015, each species' reported nesting success (the percentage of nests that fledged at least one offspring) was slightly above its long-term average. In the graphs that follow, the dashed line represents the 19-year-average of nesting success (1997–2015). Good or bad years will be above or below the dashed line, while normal years will be near it. Fortunately for the bluebirds, 2015 was a good year for all.

Eastern Bluebirds, champions of consistency

2015: *78.2% of nest attempts were successful*
Long-term average: *74.1% (95% confidence interval: 72.9–75.4%)*
Conclusion: *An above-average year*

While a smaller percentage of Eastern Bluebird nests fledge offspring than other species of bluebirds, nesting success rates have been the least variable from year to year for this bluebird species. In 2015, nesting success was 78.2%, about 4% higher than the long-term average and well above the 95% confidence interval. A whopping 56,132 nests with known outcomes were used for this analysis.



Eastern Bluebird eggs by Richard Lombard

Eastern Bluebird nestlings by Donald Ulaszewski

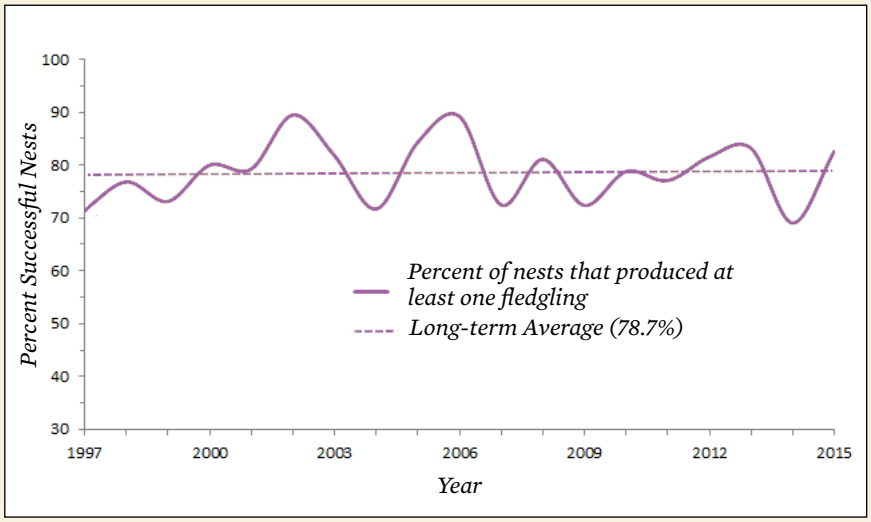
Mountain Bluebird fledgling by David Smith

Mountain Bluebird by RobinsEgg

Mountain Bluebirds, steady on

2015: *82.6% of nest attempts were successful*
Long-term average: *78.7% (95% confidence interval: 76.0–81.4%)*
Conclusion: *An above-average year*

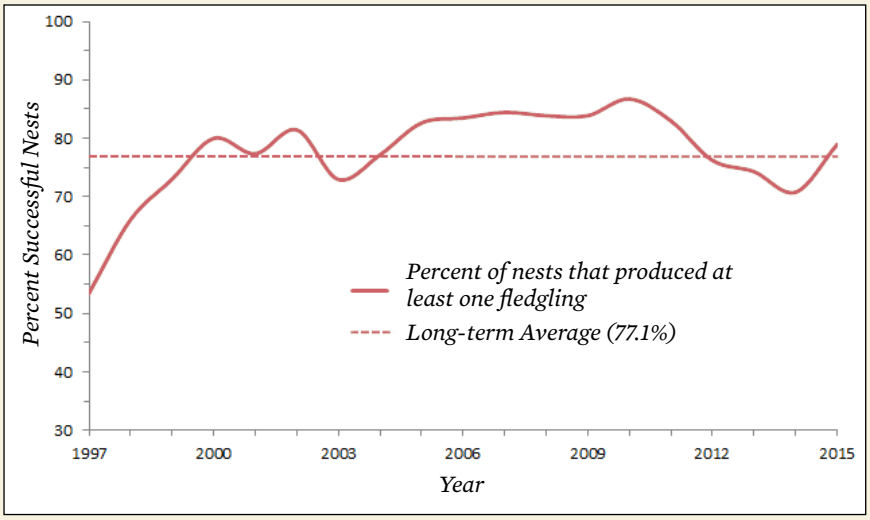
Mountain Bluebirds have enjoyed the highest average nest success rate of the three bluebird species, 78.7% on average. Variability in nesting success for Mountain Bluebirds is more than we have seen for Eastern Bluebirds. In 2015, nesting success was 82.6%, about 4% higher than the long-term average and above the 95% confidence interval. A solid 8,461 nests with known outcomes were used for this analysis.



Western Bluebirds, hot and cold

2015: *78.9% of nest attempts were successful*
Long-term average: *77.4% (95% confidence interval: 73.8–80.9%)*
Conclusion: *An average year, but still very good*

Western Bluebirds have experienced the second highest rate of nesting success of the three bluebird species with an average of 77.4% nests fledging at least one offspring. Western Bluebirds, however, have been the most variable in terms of their nesting success, with higher peaks and lower valleys. Nesting success was 78.9% in 2015, which is just a hair above average for the species. An amazing 21,096 nests with known outcomes were used for this analysis.



Western Bluebird by Jim Barnhart

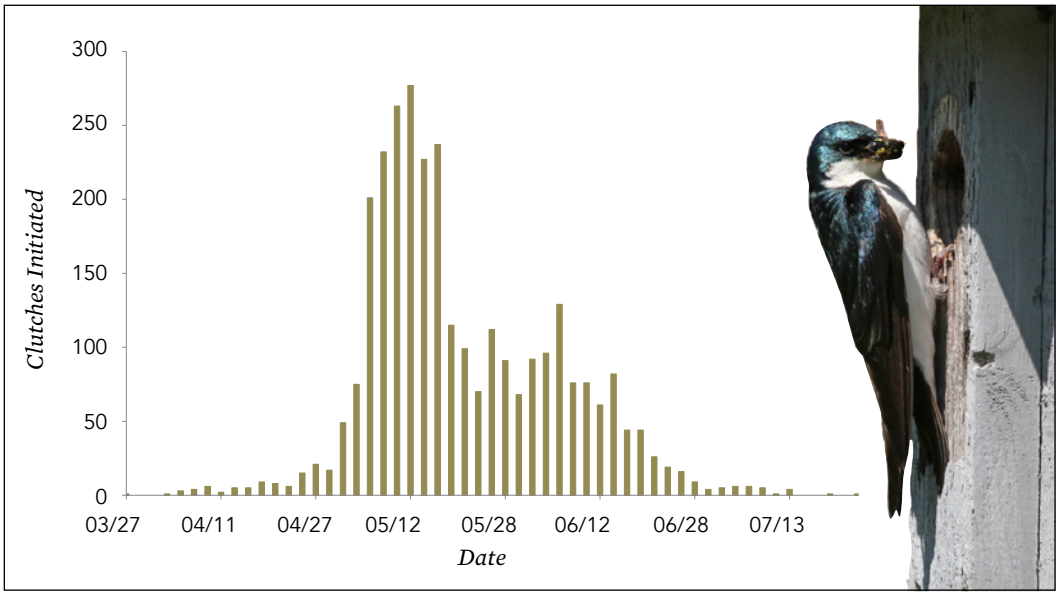
First egg dates in 2015

BY ROBYN BAILEY, PROJECT LEADER

First egg dates collected by NestWatchers provide very important information:they tell us a lot about the way that birds respond to their environment. The dates on which birds start laying eggs depend on weather and the availability of enough food, and so a comparison of first egg dates across years or between regions can inform us about how birds perceive their environments on any given date. Information on first egg dates have been used for many purposes, including determining:

- whether a species typically has one, two, or more clutches in different parts of its range;
- if long-term or year-to-year variation in climate is having a noticeable effect on birds' reproductive timing;
- when timber harvesting can be conducted by a paper company in order to avoid harming nesting birds;
- when nests of a host species for West Nile virus are most readily available to mosquitos, which will affect transmission rates of the virus among birds and to other animals including humans.

Tree Swallow Clutch Initiation



TREE SWALLOW BY JOHN MAYLAND

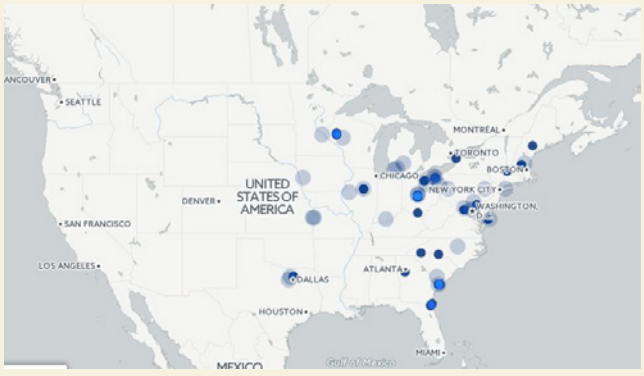
The Tree Swallow, which is typically single-brooded throughout much of its range, has a clear peak of first egg date in early May that tapers off gradually as the more northern or less experienced nesters initiate nesting a bit later (based on 3,022 reports).

The very first report of egg-laying in NestWatch in 2015 was a Bald Eagle recorded in Virginia on January 10, followed closely by an Anna's Hummingbird in California on January 11. The very latest, 280 days later, was a Carolina Chickadee that started laying eggs in a nest on October 17 in Georgia. May 10 was the most common date for clutch initiation in 2015, with 637 people reporting a first egg on that day. Tree Swallows, a species with an enormous breeding range, had a remarkably synchronized breeding season, peaking within an 11-day period in early May when the information was collated across all of the reported nests in North America.

To learn more about how to estimate a first egg date, visit this **FAQ online**.

Online extra

See an **animated map** of the 2015 nesting season online. Watch the entire nesting season progress in 30 seconds for a fun new way to visualize the timing of clutch initiation across the country.



Tree Swallow eggs by Paula Ziebarth

Temperature, first egg dates, and farms

BY JASON COURTER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY, MALONE UNIVERSITY

Recent analyses based on citizen-science data indicate that spring nesting dates of many birds are advancing in response to changing global climates. Understanding the degree to which temperature influences nesting in birds could alert us to the impacts of climate change on plants, wildlife, and even humans. Once again, birds may be acting as our "canaries in the coal mine."

Researchers at Clemson and Malone Universities, as well as at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, are currently analyzing more than 30,000 first egg dates of Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and House Sparrows in eastern North America reported by NestWatch volunteers from 2001–2010. We are interested in how nesting dates correlate with measures of temperature, and in particular, how "growing degree-days" can be used to predict nesting dates. Growing degree-days is a temperature-based concept familiar to most farmers because it provides a measure of seasonal crop progress and a guide for timing farm management activities such as pesticide and herbicide application. One advantage of using growing degree-days is that they are cumulative measures of heat and are independent of calendar date (for example, egg hatch of the invasive gypsy moth in Ohio is better approximated by the accumulation of 200 growing degree-days than it is by using an average calendar date of May 5). Because first egg dates in birds is closely related to the ecology of insects and plants that serve as the primary food sources for their young, we hypothesize that degree-days may also be a strong predictor of first egg dates in birds.

We have submitted our initial findings for publication in a popular scientific journal and look forward to sharing our results with NestWatch volunteers when our findings are published. Our hope is that specific management recommendations for birds can be made using familiar degree-day-based communications that promote biological pest suppression and are compatible with the goals of sustainable farming. We are grateful for the countless volunteers who have faithfully submitted nesting observations through NestWatch and made a project of this magnitude possible. We truly view this project as a partnership and hope that our results help us better understand the ecological processes that impact us all.

Regional roundup

Highlights from the 2015 breeding season

BY ROBYN BAILEY, PROJECT LEADER

Boreal Chickadee by Vickie Tuskan

Last year, we received data on 18,097 nesting attempts. Thank you to all the NestWatch participants who submitted data. On average, that's almost 11 nests submitted for every participant (or participant group). Great job! These data are summarized by region in the pages that follow.

One thing to notice from the tables is that open-nesting birds tend to fare worse in general than cavity-nesting birds, because their nests are more vulnerable to predation and weather. The most notable exception to this is the House Sparrow which, due to invasive species management in nest boxes, has extremely low nesting success across the board.

Where nesting success for 2015 versus previous years (1997–2014) is reported, only those nests for which an outcome was given were used in these calculations. We define nesting success as the percentage of nests fledging at least one young. NestWatchers were confident about the outcome of a nest about 76% of the time, but nearly a quarter of all nests submitted this year had "unknown" outcomes. Therefore, the number of nests used to estimate nesting success is generally smaller than those for which clutch size was reported; we are only reporting results for species with a minimum of 10 nests with reported outcomes.

The "change" column indicates how 2015 nesting success was different from the average of all previous years. It can help you interpret whether 2015 was a "good year" or a "bad year" for a species in your region, but it's not necessarily an indication of a long-term trend. A single up (⮝) or down (⮟) arrow means that 2015 differed from previous years by 5–10%. A double up or down arrow indicates that 2015 differed from previous years by more than 10%. No arrow is given for changes less than 5%, and an asterisk (*) indicates insufficient data for a region.

HAWAII

NestWatch has never received any data from Hawaii, but we'd sure like to. In fact, **we'll give a special prize to the first person who submits some**! Win a two-disc audio guide to Hawaii's birds and a Cornell Lab of Ornithology insulated cooler bag just for being the first person to submit a nest record.

ALASKA AND NORTHERN CANADA

Only two nests were reported for this region, a Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco and a Boreal Chickadee. We could use some more data from the far north!

2015 NestWatch Season Totals

18,097 NEST ATTEMPTS
1,673 PARTICIPANTS
171 SPECIES
60,139 EGGS
41,098 FLEDGLINGS

Cactus Wren by Lou Orr

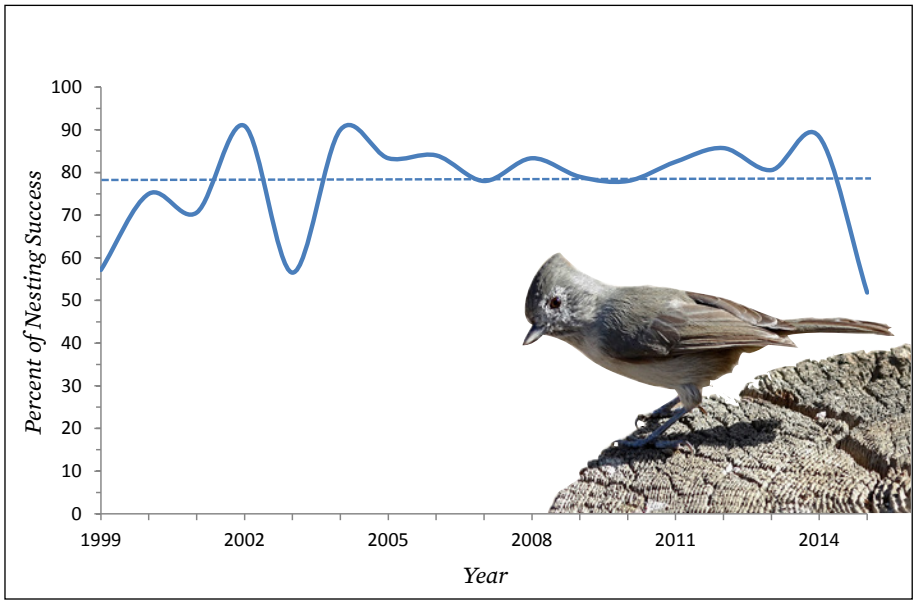
Southwest region

In the Southwest, the most monitored bird was the Western Bluebird, which enjoyed quite high nesting success along with the third-ranking Mountain Bluebird. Violet-green Swallows were slightly more successful than Tree Swallows, although they were reported less often.

The most dramatic drop in nesting success was for that of the Oak Titmouse. Compared to previous years, 2015 brought a 27% drop in Oak Titmouse nesting success, making it the lowest year on record. Oak Titmice, which occur primarily in California, are also declining in this region and the number of participants reporting them has simultaneously dropped. We need more data to understand these declines.

Oak Titmouse by Jean Oedewaldt

Oak Titmouse



Oak Titmouse by Trude Herd

NestWatchers in the Southwest reported the lowest-ever productivity for Oak Titmouse in 2015, at 51.9% (the long-term average is 79.2%, based on 1,056 nests).

TOP-10 LIST: 2,543 NESTS REPORTED FOR ALL SPECIES

Rank	*Species*	*2015 Total nests reported*	*2015 Average clutch size*	*2015 Average fledglings*	*2015 Nesting success*	*Previous nesting success*	*Change from previous*
1	Western Bluebird	774	4.5	3.2	79.4	77.8	
2	Tree Swallow	688	5.0	3.4	79.3	75.7	
3	Mountain Bluebird	588	4.7	3.6	82.2	79.9	
4	House Wren	73	5.5	4.5	74.1	78.0	
5	Mourning Dove	58	1.9	1.2	58.3	*	*
6	Violet-green Swallow	51	4.5	3.2	80.9	77.7	
7	Oak Titmouse	30	5.7	2.5	51.9	79.2	⮟⮟
8	Ash-throated Flycatcher	29	3.9	2.6	71.4	77.3	⮟
9	House Finch	23	4.3	2.5	60.0	*	*
10	White-breasted Nuthatch	15	5.1	4.0	100.0	86.5	⮝⮝

*Insufficient data

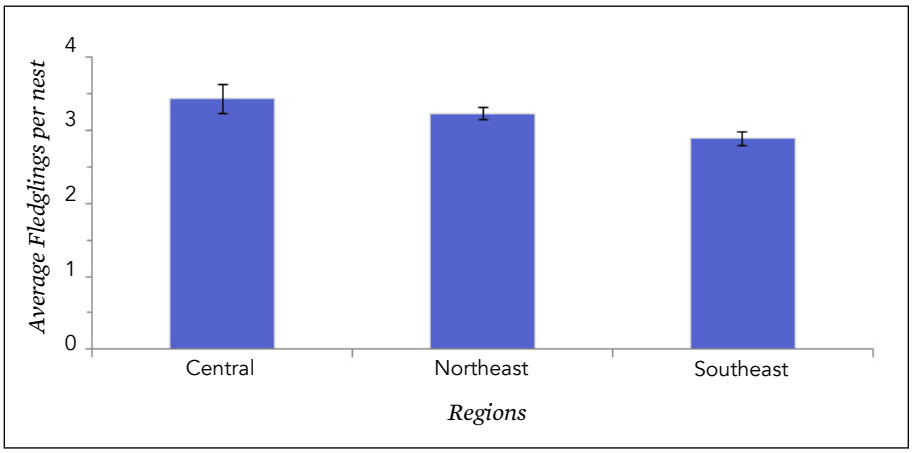
Southeast region

In the Southeast, nesting success was relatively lower for House Wrens compared to all other regions (at 65%), which has been the case in previous years as well. Bewick's Wren, which is more widely distributed in this region than the House Wren, had relatively higher nesting success in 2015 than usual.

Interestingly, and despite an overall successful season, Eastern Bluebirds fledged fewer young per nest (2.9) in the Southeast than in any other region, as illustrated in the graph to the right. Although the difference may seem small (about half a chick less than the highest region), it is meaningful when you consider the thousands of nests reported for this region. This pattern appears to stem from an underlying pattern of smaller clutches and a lower percentage of eggs that hatch per nest.

This lower output in the Southeast is consistent with previous research[1] that predicts that warm temperatures will select *against* large clutches because they are exposed to warm air for too long during laying, which will either reduce hatching success, or will cause eggs to hatch asynchronously. For bluebirds, this means that it may actually be in a female's best interest to lay a smaller clutch (i.e., <4 eggs) in warmer regions, rather than exceed what the environment will allow.

Eastern Bluebird Fledglings



Eastern Bluebirds fledged significantly fewer young in the Southeast than in any other region in 2015.

[1]2006. Cooper, C.B., W.M. Hochachka, T.B. Phillips, and A.A. Dhondt. Geographical and seasonal gradients in hatching failure in Eastern Bluebirds *Sialia sialis* reinforce clutch size

Brown-headed Nuthatch by Christy Cox

TOP-10 LIST: 3,578 NESTS REPORTED FOR ALL SPECIES

Rank	*Species*	*2015 Total nests reported*	*2015 Average clutch size*	*2015 Average fledglings*	*2015 Nesting Success*	*Previous nesting success*	*Change from previous*
1	Eastern Bluebird	2,157	4.2	2.9	75.5	73.3	
2	Carolina Chickadee	333	4.9	3.4	70.7	73.9	
3	Carolina Wren	127	4.6	3.3	77.8	77.0	
4	Bewick's Wren	111	5.9	4.7	86.4	74.2	▲▲
5	Brown-headed Nuthatch	97	5.1	4.1	80.6	89.0	▼
6	House Sparrow	85	2.8	1.0	25.8	27.9	
7	Black-crested Titmouse	79	4.7	3.6	81.4	90.0	▼
8	Tufted Titmouse	55	5.2	3.6	78.6	77.1	
9	Tree Swallow	50	5.1	3.4	84.6	77.6	▲
10	House Wren	46	5.0	2.8	65.0	68.5	

Northwest region

In the Northwest region, House Wren showed big gains in nesting success this year, with an increase of 17% over average, although the sample size was relatively small. Mountain Bluebird nesting success was also up slightly. Gray Flycatchers, an open-cup nester, experienced poor nesting success and an average of just one fledgling per nest.

Tree Swallow and Western Bluebird are holding steady with no major departures from long-term nesting success. Nesting success for other species was difficult to interpret due to uncertainty in nest outcomes, or not enough information from previous years with which to compare the NestWatchers' reports from 2015 (e.g., Gray Flycatcher). Prior to 2008, only data on cavity nests were accepted and so establishing historic estimates of nesting success for open-nesting species, such as Killdeer and Canada Goose, will take time. We are glad to see that more open-cup nests are being reported.

Killdeer with eggs by Bill Winkler

Gray Flycatcher nest by Jeff Kozma

TOP-10 LIST: 709 NESTS REPORTED FOR ALL SPECIES

Rank	*Species*	*2015 Total nests reported*	*2015 Average clutch size*	*2015 Average fledglings*	*2015 Nesting success*	*Previous nesting success*	*Change from previous*
1	Tree Swallow	265	5.7	4.1	81.9	78.8	
2	Mountain Bluebird	111	5.1	4.2	84.3	78.8	▲
3	Gray Flycatcher	62	3.7	1.0	25.5	*	*
4	Western Bluebird	58	5.4	3.4	75.0	71.2	
5	Canada Goose	36	3.3	2.7	*	*	*
6	House Wren	29	6.3	5.5	95.5	78.2	▲▲
7	American Robin	23	3.3	2.0	75.0	*	*
8	Black-capped Chickadee	19	5.7	3.7	*	*	*
9	Killdeer	14	3.8	3.3	*	*	*
10	Violet-green Swallow	12	4.8	3.8	*	83.4	*

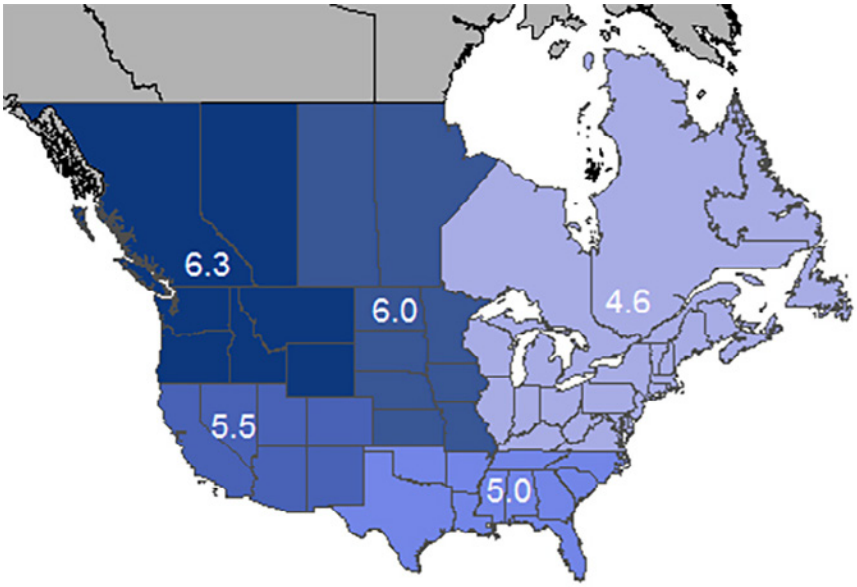
*Insufficient data

Northeast region

Nesting success was pretty high across the board in the Northeast as House Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Black-capped Chickadee and Prothonotary Warbler success rates were all above average. Exceptions to the trend included American Robins, which experienced about 12% lower nesting success than usual and fledged relatively fewer young in this region, which could potentially be due to the late ground thaw. Perhaps the worms needed for nesting were simply inaccessible in the early spring? Purple Martin nesting success was also down slightly in 2015.

It is interesting that House Wrens had the lowest clutch size in this region relative to all of the other regions in which this species nests (see map, below right). This is inconsistent with previous research[2] on House Wrens which showed an increase in clutch size as you move northward in the wren's range. We're not sure why clutch sizes were lower than expected for the Northeast in 2015.

[2]1994. Young, B.E. Geographic and seasonal patterns of clutch-size variation in House Wrens. *Auk* 111:545–555.



A map of average clutch size by region reveals that House Wrens had the lowest clutch size in the Northeast, contrary to expectations of larger clutches in the north.

House Wren by Mo Barger

TOP-10 LIST: 10,288 NESTS REPORTED FOR ALL SPECIES

Rank	*Species*	*2015 Total nests reported*	*2015 Average clutch size*	*2015 Average fledglings*	*2015 Nesting success*	*Previous nesting success*	*Change from previous*
1	Tree Swallow	3,358	4.8	3.4	77.1	75.3	
2	Eastern Bluebird	2,624	4.3	3.2	80.3	74.3	▲
3	House Wren	1,227	4.6	3.6	81.2	69.9	▲▲
4	House Sparrow	851	1.6	0.1	3.1	5.8	
5	Purple Martin	306	4.8	2.8	78.3	84.0	▼
6	Black-capped Chickadee	289	6.1	3.9	67.0	62.0	▲
7	American Robin	253	3.2	1.8	54.2	66.2	▼▼
8	Carolina Chickadee	223	4.7	3.1	63.1	61.0	
9	Prothonotary Warbler	179	4.7	3.9	88.2	83.4	▲
10	Barn Swallow	142	4.3	3.4	89.1	86.6	

Central region

NestWatchers in the Central region reported higher-than-usual nesting success for House Wren, which was up 12% from the average. Eastern Bluebird and Tree Swallow are holding steady with no major changes in nesting success. Success for House Sparrows was lowest for this region, indicating a high degree of management against this non-native species. [Note that only non-native species such as the House Sparrow and European Starling can legally be removed from nest boxes.]

Purple Martins by Mike Anderson

Surprisingly, no failed nests of Eastern Phoebes were reported, which has us wondering if some of those "phoebes" were actually Brown-headed Cowbird fledglings. In fact, no other regions reported any cowbird eggs or young in phoebe nests either. Cowbirds are a brood parasite, and Eastern Phoebe is among their top choices of host. Learn how to spot a cowbird egg or nestling **online**, and remember that cowbirds should not be removed from a nest if encountered because they are native. We need data on natural nests, which includes rates of brood parasitism. Please be sure to report any eggs and young of cowbirds separately from those of the host species.

TOP-10 LIST: 974 NESTS REPORTED FOR ALL SPECIES

Rank	*Species*	*2015 Total nests reported*	*2015 Average clutch size*	*2015 Average fledglings*	*2015 Nesting success*	*Previous nesting success*	*Change from previous*
1	Eastern Bluebird	453	4.5	3.4	76.3	74.4	
2	Tree Swallow	150	5.4	4.0	80.7	76.7	
3	House Sparrow	100	2.9	0.3	1.1	10.4	▼
4	House Wren	67	6.0	4.0	74.4	62.2	▲▲
5	American Robin	36	3.7	2.9	82.4	*	*
6	Black-capped Chickadee	24	5.5	4.3	92.9	*	*
7	Barn Swallow	22	4.9	3.6	75.0	*	*
8	Eastern Phoebe	16	4.7	4.1	100.0	*	*
9	Northern Cardinal	12	3.4	1.4	*	*	*
10	Purple Martin	8	2.5	2.5	*	*	*
10	Carolina Chickadee	8	4.9	3.3	*	*	*

*Insufficient data

NESTS, EGGS, & INCUBATION

New ideas about avian reproduction

Edited by D. C. Deeming and S. J. Reynolds

Includes a chapter on citizen science by Lab staff!

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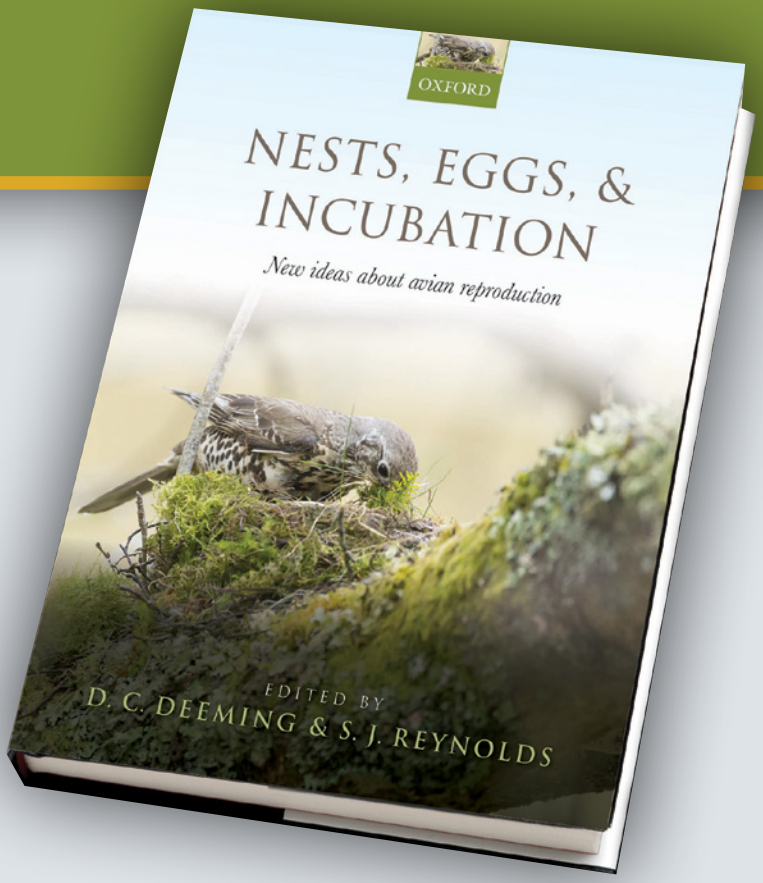

Nests, Eggs, and Incubation brings together a global team of leading authorities to provide a comprehensive overview of the fascinating and diverse field of avian incubation. Starting with a new assessment of the evolution of avian reproductive biology in light of recent research, the book goes on to cover four broad areas: the nest, the egg, incubation, and the study of avian reproduction. New research on nest structures, egg traits, and life history is incorporated, whilst contemporary methodologies such as self-contained temperature probes and citizen science are also discussed. Applied chapters describe how biological knowledge can be applied to challenges such as conservation and climate change. The book concludes by suggesting priorities for future research.

This book builds upon the foundations laid down by Charles Deeming's 2001 work *Avian Incubation* (now freely available for download with your purchase of *Nests, Eggs, and Incubation*), much of which remains relevant today. Read in conjunction with this previous volume, it provides an up to date and thorough review of egg biology, nest function, and incubation behavior, which will be an essential resource for students of avian biology as well as professional and field ornithologists.

D. C. DEEMING, Senior Lecturer, School of Life Sciences, University of Lincoln, UK.

S. J. REYNOLDS, Lecturer in Ornithology and Animal Conservation, School of Biosciences, University of Birmingham, UK.

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Wildlife @ work

Spotlight on the General Motors Tech Center, a NestWatch chapter

BY CHELSEA BENSON, PROJECT ASSISTANT

The majority of NestWatch participants are individuals who monitor neighborhood nests, but there is another important group which deserves a high five—our chapters. NestWatch has 37 chapters in the United States and one in Québec. NestWatch chapters are typically based at nature centers, parks, wildlife refuges, zoos, and other nature-minded organizations, but increasingly we are seeing NestWatch move into the commercial workplace.

A growing number of businesses want to improve their environmental stewardship. One such corporate campus is the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan. With more than 700 acres, the campus has a variety of habitat types including a forest perimeter, designated "no-mow" grasslands, and several man-made ponds. NestWatch has been included in a larger effort between GM and the **Wildlife Habitat Council** (WHC) to help conserve habitat and promote the biological diversity of plants, pollinators, and birds on the expansive campus.

The GM NestWatch Chapter is headed up by Paul Messing, Ken Fryer, and a team of coworkers who have volunteered to be a part of the wildlife habitat committee. According to Messing, the committee consists of 12 employees, each with their unique talents: "People that love nature photography, those that like getting their hands dirty building bird houses, and even managers who enjoy nature—all are teaming up to play roles in monitoring nests at the site."

The GM Tech Center has established nest boxes for a variety of songbirds, Eastern Screech-Owls, and Wood Ducks. In addition to monitoring these boxes and open-cup nests, they have also been involved in monitoring birds of prey including a Red-tailed Hawk nest and a Peregrine Falcon nest. The Peregrine Falcon nest was first established in 2013 and has produced seven fledglings over the last three years. GM NestWatch chapter members were privileged to see the 2015 Peregrine Falcon nestlings up close when they were banded by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The nestlings were aptly named Chevy, Sonic, and Dino!

Since its inception, the chapter has grown quickly. Messing notes, "I never imagined, back when I was checking the two bird houses and finding House Sparrows, that I would be writing about the success of a team that has, just in our third year, monitored the return of Cliff Swallows to nest, watched a Red-tailed Hawk chick fledge from a nest, and teamed up to name and band Peregrine Falcons on the company's engineering campus." The GM Tech Center, in addition to conserving habitat and monitoring nesting birds, is building a corporate community grounded in environmental stewardship.

You can locate a chapter near you or learn how to start a NestWatch chapter of your own on our **website**. Chapters are organizations that help us teach others about the NestWatch program and train participants in their local communities.

Above the GM Tech Center, a biologist from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources nets a Peregrine Falcon nestling for banding.

Barb Baldinger

Second annual Home Tweet Home photo contest

BY CHELSEA BENSON, PROJECT ASSISTANT

In July, NestWatch hosted its second annual Home Tweet Home photo contest. The month-long contest featured four categories: Beautiful Eggs, Best Nest, Cutest Baby, and Feeding Time. Winning photos from each category were eligible for the People's Choice and Judges' Choice awards. In addition to the winning photos, the judges selected a handful of honorable mentions.

Category winners received great prizes including nest boxes from Coveside Conservation Products, bird feeders from Pennington, and nest cams from Birdhouse Spy Cam, along with several goodies from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

We want to thank everyone who submitted their best work, as well as those who took time to vote for photos. Get your cameras ready for this coming July when Home Tweet Home returns! The contest is open to everyone, and is free to enter, so submit your best photos!

See more photos online

See the gallery of winners and learn more about the contest by visiting Home Tweet Home online at **nestwatch.org/connect/homes-2015/**.

Juvenile Tri-colored Heron by Mike Smeets

Burrowing Owls by Loi Nguyen

Anna's Hummingbird by Susan Etherton

Northern Gannets by Mike Anderson