

The Bluebirds had a record year! I knew that the trail was busy, but I was not expecting that. We had 655 bluebirds fledged – 420 Western and 235 Mountain. Not a record for either species, but a record for the Vredenburgh trail. Add the House wrens (27) and the total is 682 birds fledged this year. This brings the total birds fledged on the Vredenburgh Trail since 1982 to 19,329! We're closing in on 20,000 birds fledged. Our Durr road boxes added 101 birds. Total for both trails this year is 783 birds fledged.

If you look at the Fledge results from 1982-2024, you will see that 420 Western bluebirds are a great number, but not out of the ordinary. The big difference is in the Mountain bluebirds. Last year, they hit a record of 252 fledglings, and this year 235. I wonder what is happening with them. The fire in 2022 certainly rejuvenated the landscape, but most of the Mountain bluebirds nest on the upper trail, which was not affected by that fire. Perhaps they have lost nesting habitat elsewhere, drawing more of them to the Vredenburgh trail. Whatever the reason, it makes me happy to see that they are doing so well.



In other good news, Boxes 1 through 13.1 on the Lower trail are seeing an increase in fledglings. It's a small increase, but it is most welcome. The Black Canyon fire (this year) burned to the road across from these boxes, so maybe next year things will improve even more with the fire rejuvenated landscape.

It is normal to deal with weather issues on the trail, but this year brought something different – cattle. For a month or so during the summer, cattle being grazed nearby escaped the grazing area and they were all over the lower trail! We had to dodge cow "pies" to monitor boxes, and Joe and I were kept away from a box when a bull blocked our path. They were rounded up shortly after that by a cowboy on a horse with a cattle dog and GPS. Expect the unexpected on the Bluebird trail.

Of course, volunteers are key to the success of this trail. Whenever I talk to others, including groups I speak to about the trail, I mention how great our volunteers are. Thank you to our volunteer monitors: Nancy Born and her Team Blue Jeans, Terry and Dale Critchlow, Becky and Dick Drew, Martha Fleming, Jan and Judy Gano, Besty Martin, Sara and Ron Montgomery, Jenifer Parsons, Deborah Severtson-Coffin, and Sue Wright (Durr road). Special thanks to Richard Repp, who assisted with monitoring and continued his invaluable help with sponsor payments by contacting sponsors about their boxes and tracking payments, and for being my proofreader so that the information on the report is accurate. Thank you to our neighbor Randy. We lost two boxes to vandalism this year, and another was stolen. We were almost out of boxes. Randy generously made us ten additional boxes at no charge! Thank you to my husband Joe, who is my "silent" partner and indispensable to me. And last but certainly not least, thank you to our many sponsors for your continued support.

Karen Zook

Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail Chair