2014-2024 Cavity Nesting Bird Results

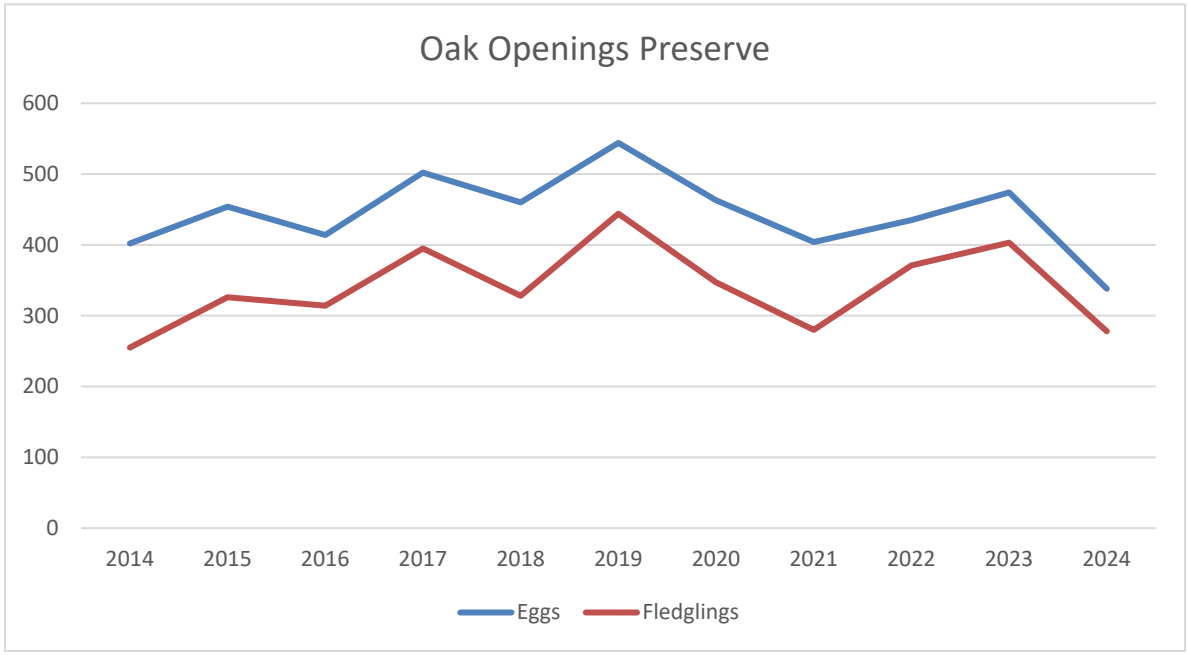
This volunteer monitoring program started in 1988, has continued annually since that time, and originally focused on providing boxes/habitat for the breeding eastern bluebird population in the Metroparks. At one time (1950's-1970's), this species was rapidly declining, so many nest box programs started up for bird conservation. However, currently, Metroparks monitors all native songbird species that inhabit nesting boxes in and adjacent to open, managed areas (Eastern Bluebird, House Wren, Tree Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee).

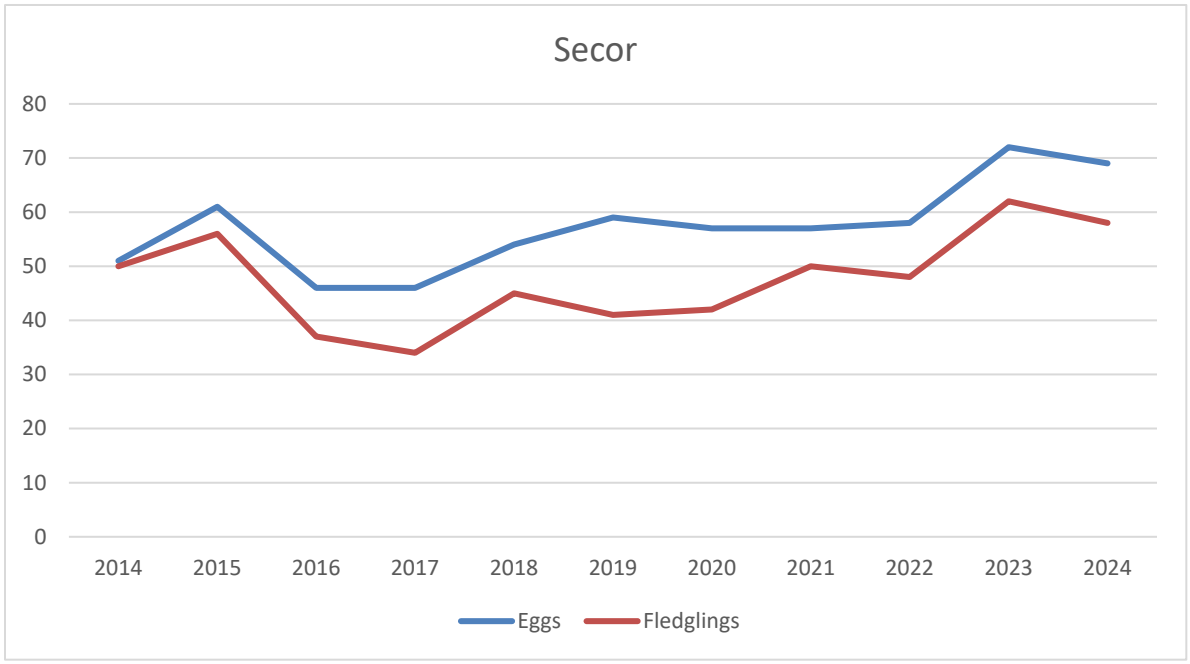
The main purpose of the Metroparks Cavity Nesting Monitoring program is to maintain the eastern bluebird population in the Metroparks through providing suitable nesting boxes, managing good habitat, and also monitoring the success of other native, cavity nesting bird species. Since the Oak Openings Region has always been a "stronghold" for the eastern bluebird, it is important to keep the largest percentage of boxes in managed and restored "openings" in this area. As a secondary nester, the eastern bluebird relies on abandoned cavities in open areas previously created by woodpeckers. Many of those cavities have the potential to become occupied by non-native species such as starlings and house sparrows---mostly, in urban and some suburban areas. Bluebirds can also be "out-competed" not only by non-native birds, but also by other native, cavity nesters, such as woodpeckers and great-crested flycatchers. In addition to maintaining the Eastern Bluebird population, Metroparks is currently adding more boxes for Wood Ducks, Screech Owls, and American Kestrels.

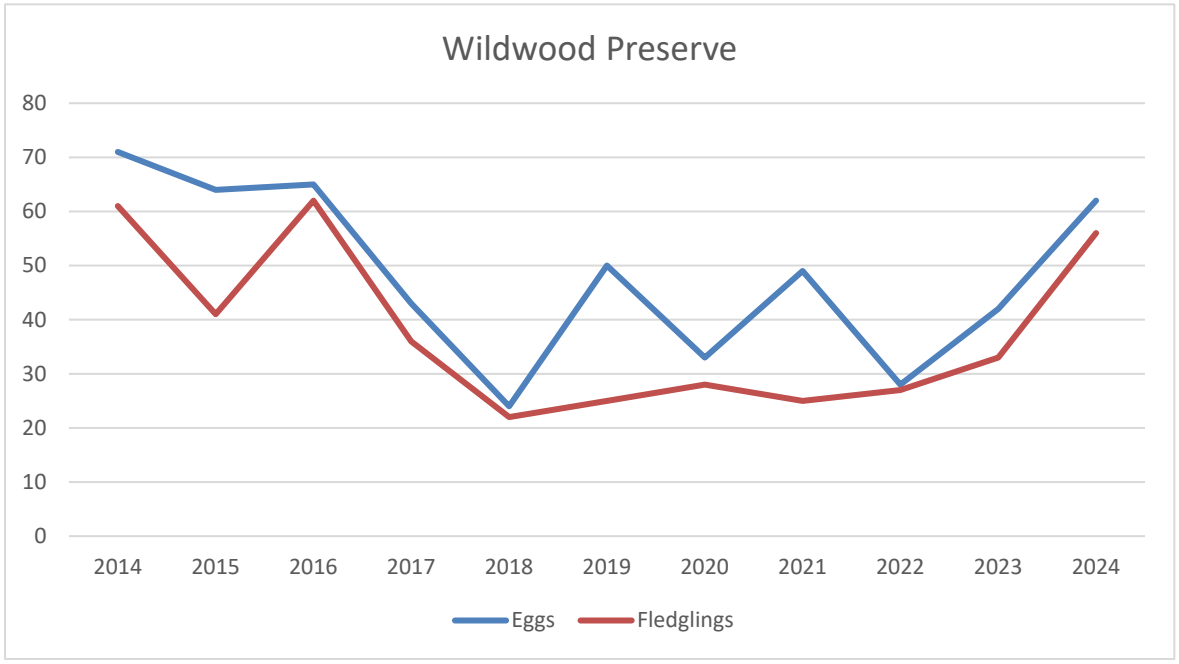
Most of the nest boxes are located and monitored in Oak Openings Preserve (59---2013), (67---2014), (68---2015), (68---2016), (66---2017), (66---2018), (65---2019), and (64---2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024) with the remainder of the boxes in Secor (10), Wildwood Preserve (8), Swan Creek Preserve (9), Side Cut (2018-2024--7), Blue Creek (2018-2024--5—(4), and Howard Marsh (2018-2024--6).

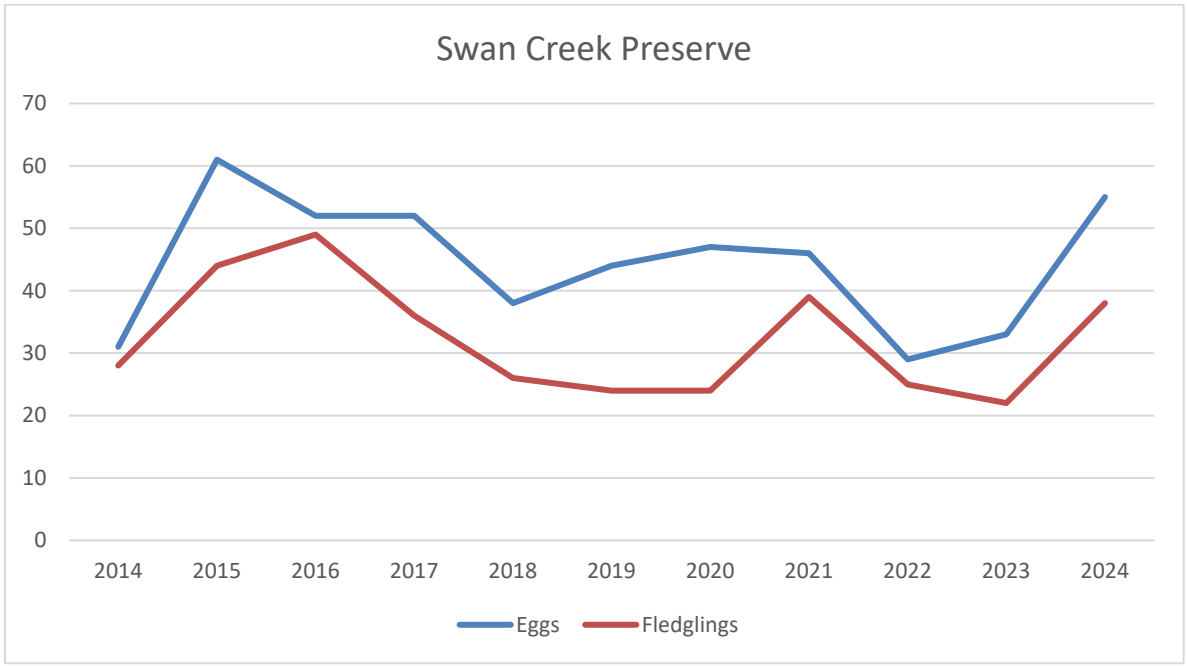
Boxes are monitored/checked from mid-April (depending on the weather) until mid- August or until nesting is completed. Each monitor is required to check the boxes on a weekly to bi-weekly basis, keeping data on the progress of the current brood (eggs, young, and fledgling status). Data such as: species building nest; number of eggs; number of young; known or presumed fledged, and evidence of predation is noted on a card and then submitted. Boxes are checked by removing the nail or screw and opening up the front door. Volunteers are trained according to a standard set of monitoring guidelines/instructions that are updated annually.

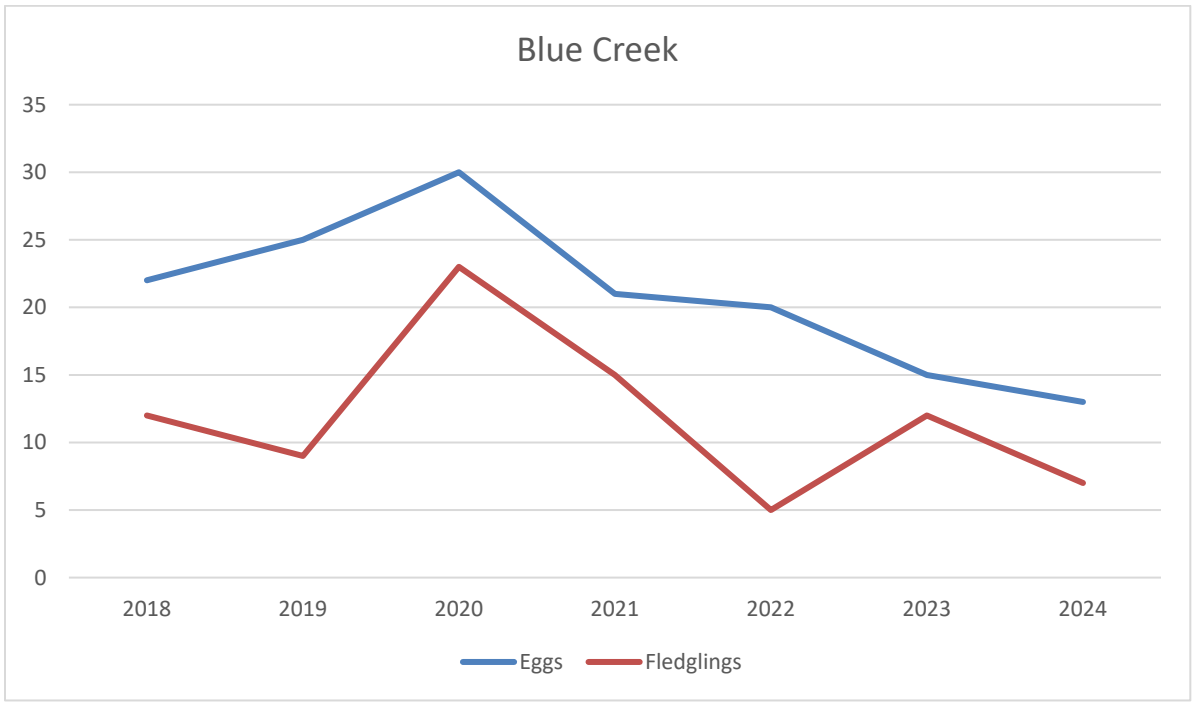
The following line graphs reflect comparative data for parks from 2014-2024 and 2018-2024.

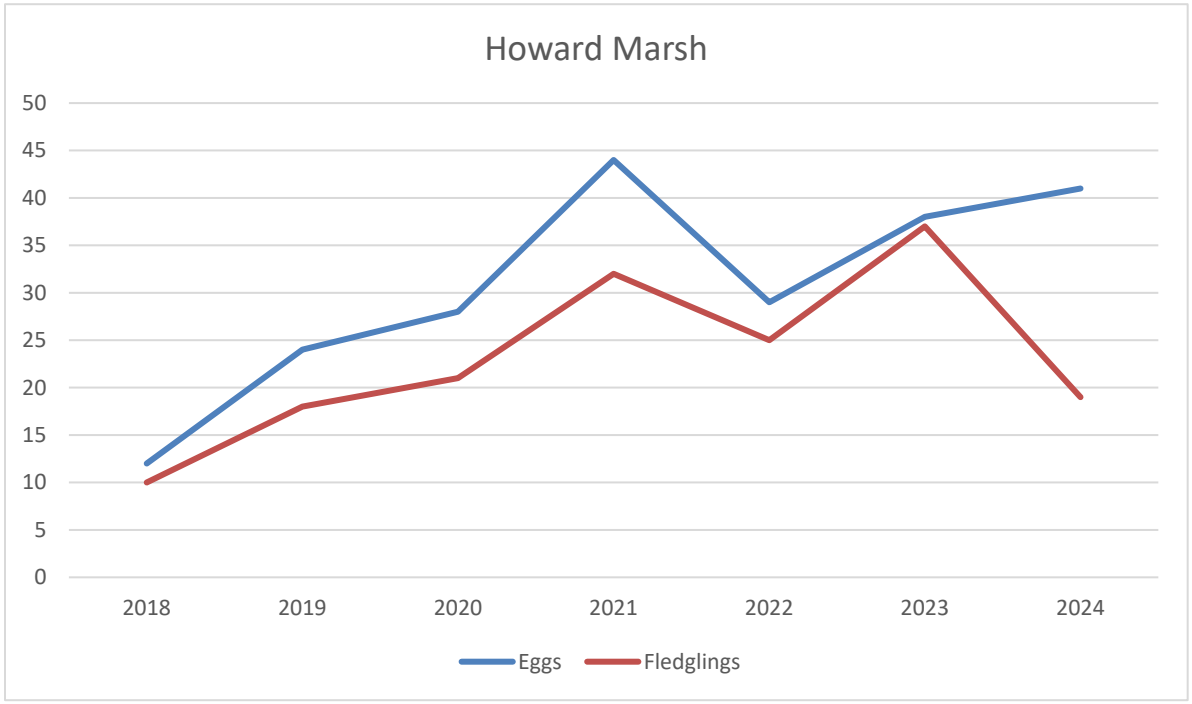

Oak Openings Preserve
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
Eggs
Fledglings


Secor
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
Eggs
Fledglings


Wildwood Preserve
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
Eggs
Fledglings


Swan Creek Preserve
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
Eggs
Fledglings


Blue Creek
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
Eggs
Fledglings


Howard Marsh
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
Eggs
Fledglings

2024 Metroparks Cavity Nesting Bird Data	Oak Openings Eggs	Oak Openings Fledged	Wildwood Eggs	**Wildwood Fledged**	**Swan Creek Eggs**	**Swan Creek Fledged**	**Secor Eggs**	**Secor Fledged**
Eastern Bluebird	187	145	26	24	48	31	24	24
House Wren	146	112	32	32	7	7	45	34
Tree Swallow	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Carolina Wren	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Titmouse/Chickadee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals:	333	257	62	56	55	38	69	58

2024 Metroparks Cavity Nesting Bird Data	Blue Creek Eggs	Blue Creek Fledged	Middle-grounds Eggs	**Middle-grounds Fledged**	**Side Cut Eggs**	**Side Cut Fledged**	**Howard Marsh Eggs**	**Howard Marsh Fledged**
Eastern Bluebird	13	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
House Wren	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tree Swallow	0	0	11	11	24	20	41	19
Titmouse/Chickadee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals:	13	7	11	11	24	20	41	19

2024 Quick Summary

Tree swallow numbers continue to be consistent throughout the park sites near the Maumee River and Lake Erie. However, Howard Marsh experienced some raccoon predation, which caused a drop in the total fledged. Last season experienced much rain during the spring and then many days during the summer months hovered above 90 degrees with drought conditions. Dryness and heat may possibly point to a lower food availability affecting the breeding fitness in eastern bluebirds; therefore, resulting in lower numbers of eastern bluebirds that fledged, overall. Swan Creek Preserve saw an increase in eastern bluebird numbers last season!

Thank you for monitoring this season! Volunteer monitoring contributes to annual natural resource management planning and measurement efforts for each park site regarding habitat quality. It also provides important, long-term information about species successes, as well as declines and aids in tracking changes in ecological conditions. We appreciate all of your tremendous efforts as monitors.