



Burroughs Audubon Society

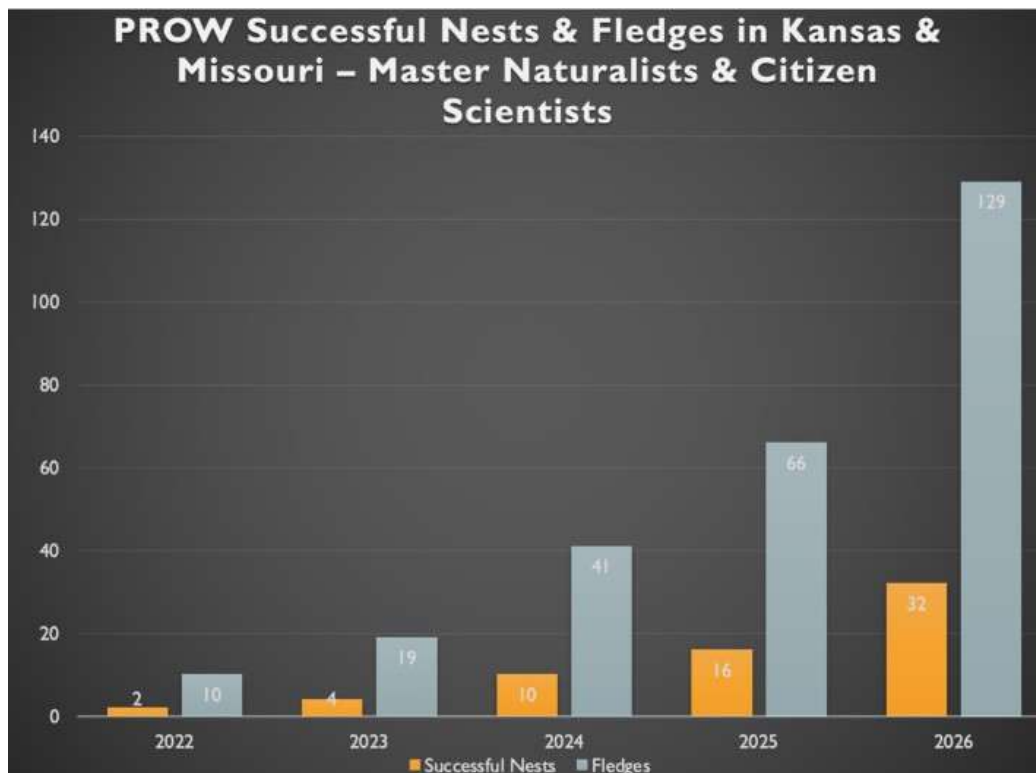
The Greater Kansas City Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Results from the 2026 Prothonotary Warbler Nest Box and Migration Study

The spring and summer of 2026 were record-setting in almost every way for Prothonotary Warblers (PROWs) in eastern Kansas and Missouri, thanks to the hard work and dedication of volunteers in providing nesting boxes and through diligent observing and monitoring.

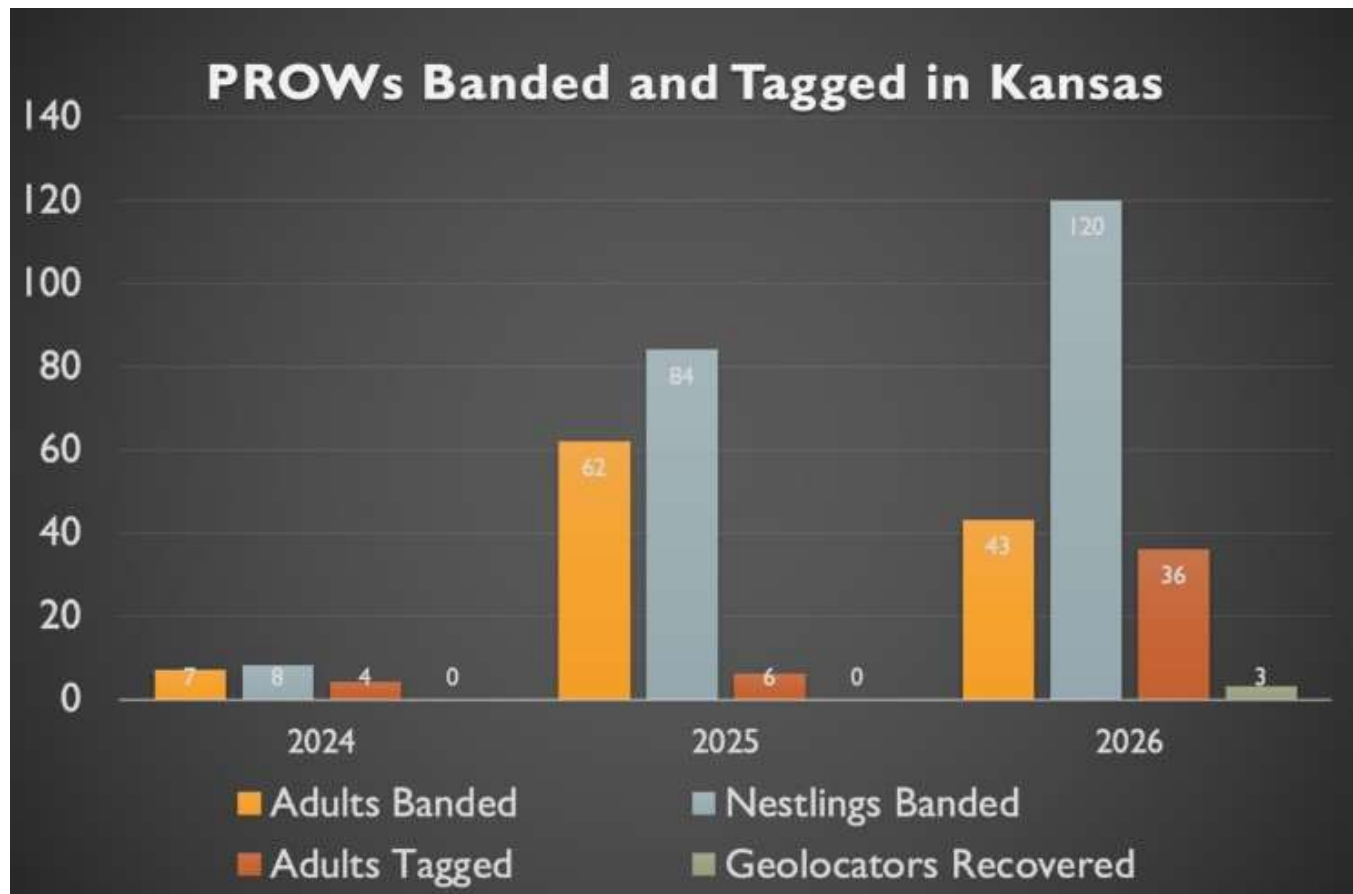
2026 PROW Nestbox Tallies

The graph below shows the number of successful nests and number of fledges for the citizen scientists and Master Naturalists in eastern Kansas and Missouri. The Johnson County K-State Extension Master Naturalists started the Pilot PROW Nesting Box Study very slowly with only a few boxes in 2022. In 2026, we had 82 nesting locations and 32 successful PROW nests with 129 fledges. We had nine failed nests (flooding (n=3), excessive heat (n=5), and predation (n=1)). This calculates to a nest success rate of 78 percent. This is exceptional, especially considering the nest success rate for PROWs nesting in the wild is around 50%. *The tallies in this graph do not include the almost 100 fledges from the PROW boxes at Pittsburg State University in their study that started in 2025.*



Banded Nestlings Returns

Our most important scientific discoveries this year were the banded nestling returns (philopatry return rate of 22 percent for nestlings banded at Wyandotte County Lake Park) and the recapture of three PROWs with geolocators. We are grateful to Dr. Andy George and Graduate Teaching Assistant, Gabe McClain of Pittsburg State University, as they made numerous trips to the Kansas City area from Pittsburg, Kansas throughout the summer. Without those two expert ornithologists and bird banders, these discoveries and recaptures would not have been possible.



Two of the banded nestlings (“Bandit and “Outlaw”) from different nests at Wyandotte County Lake Park in 2025 nested together this year, had two broods, and fledged 10 young PROWs. Andy and Gabe were also able to recapture three PROWs banded and tagged with geolocators in 2025. These recaptures include “Hydrogen” from Wyandotte County Lake Park in Kansas, “Mulberry” from Wilderness Wetlands in the Johnson County Parks and Recreation District in Kansas, and “Patches” from SE Kansas.

Migratory Travels

Andy and Gabe were able to download and analyze Hydrogen’s migratory travels, and his migration map is on the next page. It is astounding that Hydrogen traveled from NE Kansas to the country of Colombia in South America for the winter and then returned to the exact same location at Wyandotte County Lake Park for successful nesting this year. The batteries were depleted in the geolocators carried by Mulberry and Patches. Their migration data will be retrieved by the manufacturer of the devices in Europe. We will publish their range maps when they become available.



Range map for Hydrogen, a Prothonotary Warbler banded at Wyandotte County Lake in 2025.

Hitching a Ride

As the PROWs leave Missouri and Kansas for their winter home in Colombia in South America, they may show up in unusual places along the way. Eweleen Good from SE Kansas sent this photo to Burroughs Audubon Society President Ann Tanner from a “What’s This Bird?” group on Facebook. The boater who captured the photo of this PROW on August 6, 2026, was 100 miles off the coast of Texas. The warbler stopped to rest and perhaps catch a free ride south before resuming his journey to South America under his own power. Of course, the first thing Eweleen and Ann looked for were colored study bands on the bird’s legs. There were none.

