



Bluebird News



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Editor: Lance Krog
Editorial Staff: Mike Sandberg

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Thank you for remembering.

I would like to thank all the wonderful people who remembered our family upon the passing of my brother Jack Ruths in February. Jack and I were close and he was my only sibling so it's been really hard for me. Jack had cancer for the last few years and was so courageous and never complained. He was the greatest. To all of you who called, e-mailed, wrote, came up to me at the Conference and gave your condolences and hugs I can't tell how much it meant to me.

JENean Mortenson

Message to Our Members from Lance Krog, Chairman

The Heat Is On

Welcome to the summer edition of Bluebird News everyone. Summer heat is definitely upon us here in Minnesota. It seems like only yesterday we were complaining about the cold and looking forward to spring and the return of our beloved bluebirds and now here it is the end of the season already! It certainly has been an interesting year and based upon reports received from bluebirders across the state the overwhelming news is that bluebird numbers appear to be down this year. While some monitors are reporting strong numbers or even increases, the majority of reports indicate that the number of nesting bluebird pairs in general is down, the number of eggs per clutch is slightly lower than normal with many nests containing only 3

eggs, and second nesting is not taking place at the rate we would normally expect. So if your trail is down from last year, you are definitely not alone.

My own trail has been both disappointing and encouraging this season. Last fall I decided to take a good hard look at the number of bluebirds fledged per location and the percentage of boxes which had not been occupied by bluebirds. In some locations the occupancy percentage was very high but in others, I had to admit there were just too many boxes that hadn't been occupied for several years and a number of them were removed. Consequently, the percentage of boxes occupied by bluebirds on my trail is up this year. As a result, it's a lot more fun to check the trail when a higher percentage of boxes have bluebirds in them. But on the down

side, many of the second nests only contain 3-4 eggs instead of 4-5 and quite a few pairs have not second nested. Last year one pair nested three times and fledged 6, 6, and 5 for a total of 17 from one location! This year that same location produced 4 (: . I suppose it's possible that this pair will nest again, but it's getting late enough in the season that I won't be holding my breathe.

In 2007 bluebirds again nested in record numbers in Minnesota with 16,501 fledglings reported. All of you did an outstanding job monitoring your trails and submitting annual reports and your dedication was truly appreciated. While the population is still strong, we will be hard pressed to reach these numbers again in 2008 unless we receive a very high number of reports this year or second
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UNATTENDED AND UNMONITORED BOXES ARE A DANGER TO BLUEBIRDS

Whether you have 1 bluebird nest box in your yard or an extensive trail, you've taken on a responsibility. Setting up a bluebird nest box or establishing a trail is much more than merely the act of selecting a box style, placing it in good habitat, and letting nature take its course. Some people would argue that it's not natural to monitor nest boxes, interfere with what type of inhabitant lives or does not live inside, and we should not disrupt the natural course of events. The truth is that nature was disrupted by mankind long ago and things will never be entirely "natural" again. There is nothing natural about a house sparrow. They were introduced to America less than 200 years ago and have since become the most abundant songbird on the continent. Bluebirds once nested in cavities in trees which were created by woodpeckers. As human development spread, these trees and natural nesting cavities were destroyed. House sparrows and European starlings (another non native species) competed with the bluebird for natural cavities.

Establishing and monitoring a bluebird trail is not about what's natural. It's about the "survival" of our beautiful native bluebird. Bluebirds today are dependant upon their human benefactors to not only provide them with a proper home, but to also monitor and care for that home so that they can safely raise their family in it. Simply put, anyone who puts out a bluebird box is taking on a responsibility and needs to take that responsibility seriously.

Many bad things can happen inside an unattended and unmonitored bluebird nest box. The house itself may split or rot, allowing cold and rain to enter. House sparrows may take up residence, attack bluebird chicks, destroy eggs, and even kill nesting adult bluebirds. House wrens may fill up unattended boxes with sticks, making them unusable by the bluebird. House wrens may also pierce bluebird eggs and remove young chicks from the nest. Mice can take over boxes and fill them with their own nesting material. Insects such as wasps and ants can invade boxes and drive bluebirds away. Blowfly larvae can suck the blood of young bluebirds. Mice, squirrels, and woodpeckers may enlarge the entrance holes, allowing starlings to take up residence or making it easier for predators to gain access to bluebird eggs and chicks. Unhatched eggs can break and nestlings can die, decay, and attract pests and predators. Unattended boxes also provide nesting sites for competing species to raise their young. Nothing positive for the bluebird will occur within a box that is not monitored.

If you have or know of unattended bluebirds boxes, please take them down. The bluebird will benefit in the long term by having fewer, well monitored nesting sites than many unmonitored ones. If you enjoy building boxes but do not wish to monitor them, consider donating the boxes to BBRP or others who will see that they are properly monitored. If you have a friend or neighbor with unattended boxes, invite them to come along with you when you monitor your trail and help them experience the thrill of watching bluebirds successfully raise their chicks. If they still do not wish to monitor their boxes, encourage them to either take them down or allow you to monitor them. Bluebird success will not be determined by the number of nest boxes we put up but rather the quality of the monitoring program used by the nest box owner. 1 well placed and well monitored nest box will benefit the bluebird significantly more than 100 unattended ones.

BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROGRAM MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT

Enrollment in the Bluebird Recovery Program includes: initial information packet containing plans for building the Peterson nest-box, Gilbertson PVC nestbox, and the Gilwood nestbox; Top Ten Tips to Bluebird success, nesting occupant guide, predator identification, the BBRP brochure, a trail monitor's notebook, and a quarterly newsletter which is also a source of nestbox kits, sparrow traps, videos and discounted mail-order items such as the BBRP book, Bluebird Trails – A Guide to Success. There are also annual workshops and a yearly conference. Consultation and advice are available by phone, e-mail, correspondence, or in the field.

Enrollment contributions are tax deductible.

Membership periods are:

- _____ 1 year \$12.00
- _____ 5 years \$55.00
- _____ * Gift Membership – indicate amount and period of gift _____
- _____ 2 years \$23.00
- _____ Lifetime \$150.00
- _____ Renewal
- _____ New Member

Member Name _____

Address _____ e-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone (optional) _____

***If giving a membership gift, please provide your name so that the recipient can be informed of your generosity.**

**Send to
Bluebird Recovery Program c/o Kim Crandall
1206 – 226th Ave. NE. Bethel, MN 55005**

Keeping Bluebirds Safe

Recognizing the problem of abandoned trails and unmonitored boxes and the ongoing threat they pose for bluebirds, BBRP is taking on the task of taking down poorly mounted and poorly placed nestboxes across the State of Minnesota. Through the new "Keep Bluebirds Safe" program, spearheaded by Keith Radel, Keith Radel, Loren "Murph" Murphy, Carroll Johnson, and Lance Krog, BBRP members can earn an annual patch in one of the following two ways:

(1) Get permission to take down 10 nest boxes that are not proper for bluebirds. For example:

Poorly placed:

*Move or remove nest boxes in trees or close to trees. That is habitat more suitable for house wrens than bluebirds.

*Move or remove nest boxes in wetland areas. That is habitat more suitable for tree swallows than bluebirds.

*Move or remove boxes that are in towns or by livestock farms. That is habitat more suitable for house sparrows than bluebirds.

Poorly mounted:

*Move or remove boxes that are mounted on trees or wooden posts and T-posts without raccoon baffle.

Unattended nest boxes:

*Move or remove boxes that are not being checked weekly through the nesting season. Boxes that were left closed the previous winter are probably not being checked.

(2) Work with a 4-H group, scout troop, nature center, or sportsman group that makes boxes and get them on the right track.

If they build bluebird nest boxes, help them with making a commitment to check them weekly and send in an annual report for them. Help them with placement, spacing and proper mounting. If at all possible, get them to build bird feeders or suet feeders instead.

Anyone interested in participating in the Keep Bluebirds Safe campaign can do so by assisting with one or a number of the activities listed above and submitting the form enclosed in this edition of Bluebird News.

"Nature is NOT putting up boxes for the birds to nest in. Putting up a box is interfering with nature. With that intervention comes responsibility". Nicholas A. Zbiciak, Bluebird_L 2000.

*What can you do to earn this stunning patch from BBRP?
Simple! Just follow steps 1 or 2 above, and fill out the simple form at the bottom of this page. Send it to our PO Box and you will earn your safe Bluebirds patch for 2008!*



2008 KEEP BLUEBIRDS SAFE PROGRAM

Name _____

Address _____

Location, If you took down boxes #1 • Group your work flow if #2

Briefly, explain what you did to keep Bluebirds safe:

Clip and Mail to BBRP, PO Box 984, Faribault, MN 55021

Message to Our Members

(Continued from Page 1)

and third nestings increase between now and the end of the season. So the heat is on everyone and this year your annual reports will be extremely important so that we can determine just how strong the overall population is.

We have enclosed a copy of the annual report form already in this edition. If you have friends, relatives, or neighbors who are successfully raising bluebirds but may not be BBRP members, please encourage them to submit a report this year.

All of you make BBRP possible. Networking and word of mouth is still the best way to help a friend get started or have more success with bluebirds. Best wishes to all of you for continued success on your trail this season and thanks for your ongoing support and dedication to bluebird conservation.

CONFERENCE 2008

Keith and I would like to thank each and every one of you for making our Conference a success. This was the year of challenges, I was dealing with a brother with terminal cancer, the gas prices were getting worse and then we had the snow storm the Thursday before the Conference. Keith and I have co-chaired the Conferences the last 4 years and we really enjoy it, but we also worry as expenses are higher, this year we had 280 people attend and we were so happy to see all of you. We keep hearing it's such a great thing after a long winter to get out and enjoy such a great time. We had outstanding Speakers with such a wealth of information from Keith Radel, Carrol Henderson, Peggy Boike, Murph, Carmelita Nelson and then we had our Al Batt with his wonderful stories, and Jason Davis from KSTP-TV "On the Road Again". John Beal provided the field trip to his trails, but even with the wet weather lots of people enjoyed it.

The Dick Peterson Award went to Steve Gilbertson and the Blue Birder of the year went to John Beal, they are a couple of great dedicated guys and they certainly deserved it.

Each year we get donations for goods for our silent auction and raffle and also money donated in which I can purchase items from Wild Wings so we have a great variety for our sales. We want to thank all of you and I hope I don't miss anyone as this is so appreciated, because all the money raised is used towards education that is put on during the year and for expenses.

Thanks to Lance Krog, Peg Boike, Darryl and Shirley Hill, Bob Hursh, Robert Roberts, Nick Stadler, Bob and Barb Webner, Pam Sundsmo, Dorothy Kvestad, Marlys and Glen Shirley, Tracey Hawthorne, Jan and Joe Forneris, Fern and Ken Vesledahl, Lorraine Spears, Moe Brand, Brenda Rasinski, Karen Taylor, Joe and JoAnne Adelman, Irene Macdonald, Barbara Turk, Ellen Cook, Marie Hamilton and Jean Lister who donated money, and now I'll list all who donated goods. Bruce Smisek, Donna Thorson, Barb Wagner, Steve and Cheryl Eno, Steve Gilbertson, Jack Hauser, Barb Collapy and Wendy Thomas, Jim Rathert, Joanie and Denny Cradick, Sarah Johnson, Steve and Regna Garr, David and Julie Macleod, Lance Krog, Pam Sundsmo, Loren and Mavis Jacobson, Nancy Pinke, Carmelita Nelson, Mike Sandberg, Marty Raiser, Tom and Mary Sutinger, Joan Nelson, Kim Crandall, Carl and JENean Mortenson, Mary Kalinoski, Steve Malecha, John and Colleen Beal, Keith and Cheryl Radel, Dorothy Rogers, Ardy and Murph Murphy, Marilyn Suter, and Marie McClure. Again you guys are the greatest for your thoughtfulness for our cause.

Also to all of you who brought the delicious cookies thanks so much, and we'd also like to thank all of you who had lunch for your great patience while waiting. With the ice storm the morning of, created a few problems and the lunch was one. But oh it was so delicious and we had so many people come up and tell us afterwards that wasn't a problem. They got to visit and meet people they didn't know, I think birding and wildlife lovers always can make the best out of it. Thanks for that.

We have a site for the 2009's conference and it will be in Elk River so we hope you all can attend. This year we had friends attend from North Dakota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Nebraska, Illinois, Iowa, and of course Minnesota. Our five sweet ladies that come from Thunder Bay Canada couldn't come because of the snowstorm. They were certainly missed. It's great to meet people who have the same interests and come to learn all we can possible about helping our beautiful birds. You can go into our website BBRP.ORG and see pictures from the Conference that Ardy Murphy took and she does such a good job.

JENean Mortenson and Keith Radel, Co-Chairs

Convention Pictures

	Larry Buhr (Raffle, Joan Nelson (BBRP Committee) Glen Shirley (Coffee) Fern Vesledall (BBRP Committee) Carl Mortenson (Raffle)	
		Morning Speakers: Keith Radel Jason Davis Carrol Henderson
	Marilyn Suter, (BBRP Committee) Greeter, Conference Guest Linda Buhr - Greeter	Afternoon Speakers: John Beal, (Moderator) Keith Radel, Al Batt & Loren Murphy No Pictures available for Peggy Boike and Carmelita Nelson

Interview with John Beal, BBRP Bluebirder of the Year for 2007

In 2007, Rice and Steele County bluebirder John Beal fledged 156 bluebirds from 24 locations for a total of 6.5 chicks fledged per location, making him the recipient of the 2007 Bluebirder of the Year Award. Our congratulations goes to John for his outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation. We recently interviewed John and thought you would be interested in finding out how he achieved such significant bluebird production and to what he attributes his success.

John, what caused you to become interested in bluebirds?

All my life I have had this love affair with nature. It probably came in part from being raised on the farm. Being outdoors allowed me to enjoy wildlife including lots of birds.

How long have you been a bluebirder?

I will be starting my 5th year this 2008 season.

How did you get started?

The simple answer would be "very poorly." Now that I have been associated with and belong to BBRP I can honestly say I knew nothing! Someone gave me what was called a bluebird house. Now I know it was not even close to what we now call "BBRP approved."

What mistakes did you make in the early days and what did you do to correct them?

I more or less stumbled through that first season, mounted the house that was given me in our back yard on a 2 X 2 piece of wood and we could not believe how lucky we were to almost immediately have a pair of bluebirds right there in our yard. Little did I know I had just put up what we refer to today, a perfect "Raccoon feeder!" Just before they were ready to fledge during the night MR RACCOON came along and ate all the babies! The scratches on the wooden pole along with the pinfeathers on the ground told me what had happened. That was the lowest moment in my entire bluebird career! I also made what I thought to be some other bluebird houses even guessing the hole size. I continued to do things wrong as I mounted them on steel fence posts and by doing so just put up more "raccoon feeders." I put them close enough to the road and fortunately Keith Radel saw them and stopped to see me to offer some help. I will never forget that day when I was made aware of BBRP as we sat on the edge of my deck talking about bluebirds. I listened to his advice, joined BBRP, and it has been a wonderful part of my life ever since. I can never thank Keith enough for introducing me to this wonderful hobby.

What advise would you give to a new bluebird enthusiast to help them get started or improve their trail results?

Fortunately we have so many good hearted, committed, and dedicated volunteers to talk to about how to help the bluebirds. Be sure to join BBRP, which will only cost \$1.00 a month. Our newsletters are full of tips and pointers plus dates for upcoming events. Read the 10 points brochure and pay particular attention to that very first item we call "commitment." Feel free to consult your county coordinator with any problems or questions. I would recommend both new and current members read the 10 points brochure once a month until you have all 10 points implanted in your mind. These pointers came from literally hundreds of hours of experience.

What were the key factors in your success?

I listened to the people that just flat know how to help the bluebirds. There are people in our organization that have been doing this for over 30 years. I listened to what they advised me to do. I attended seminars, annual BBRP conferences, to learn as much as possible. I know monitoring your boxes is absolutely a big key to being successful! We need to Monitor, Monitor, and Monitor! If I suspect or see evidence of problems with house sparrows or other predators I sometimes will check every other day to make sure I am in control of my trail. "Be Committed."

Do you have any tricks you'd like to share with others?

More and more I am convinced the bluebird loves to perch on their way in and out of the box. Try putting a point on a 2X4 about two feet long and drive it in the ground with a mall about 10 feet in front of your paired boxes. Take your cordless drill and attach a tree limb about 6' long to the 2X4 with some sheet rock screws.

Do you have a "most memorable moment" you would like to tell us about?

To be honest every day out on my trail is "memorable." Keith Radel told me one time, "John when you check your boxes it is just like going to the candy store." "You never know what you are going to find when you look in that box!" My fear is there are still people that are hung up on the old wives tale that if you disturb the bluebird or touch the eggs they will leave. This is absolutely, positively not true! I have even had a female sit tight on her eggs and not fly out of the box. I reached in with one finger, raised her up, counted the eggs, let her back down, closed the box and left. What a thrill that was! Check those boxes at least once a week and keep good records. That is where you will get the most enjoyment from checking your trail and being involved in BBRP. Being awarded the "Bluebirder of the year award" at this year's conference was definitely a "memorable moment." "Thank You," to all those that helped me learn the dos and don'ts of bluebirding to help me earn the award. Without that help it would never have happened. It was definitely an honor I will cherish for many years. Last but not least please allow me to say, hang around as much as you can with this wonderful group of volunteers. You will make lasting friendships along with enjoying nature at its best, "out there on your trail."

Cooperative Hens Jointly Raise Brood of 8 Eastern Bluebirds

By Mary Beth Roen, Prescott, WI

I put up my first Bluebird nest box in 1988, nailing it to a tree in a patch of woods. Unbelievably, a pair of Bluebirds did nest in it, but a house wren destroyed the eggs. I've learned a lot in the 21 years since I placed that first nest box. I didn't have a lot of resources to turn to in those days. Today there are state and national Bluebird associations and conferences, books, and Internet list servers like Bluebird-L through Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Because of what I have learned, I now have all of my boxes mounted on electric conduit/rebar poles in open areas with stovepipe baffles to eliminate mammalian predators. I have had a lot of great experiences with my Bluebird trail of 53 nest boxes, but this year was exceptional.

On May 31, 2008, I monitored a pair of boxes, #11 and #12, in the back of our farm. Box #11 had 3 Bluebird eggs in it, and Box #12 had 2 Bluebird nestlings and 2 unhatched eggs. It was unheard of to have Bluebird nests in each of 2 nest boxes pair 15 feet apart, so I didn't know what was going on, but assumed the box with eggs was abandoned. When I monitored the trail again on 6/7/08, the nestlings and eggs were all gone! The nests were not disturbed, and with the baffles on both poles, I had no idea what happened. The most likely possibility was avian depredation. I removed both nests and when I monitored my trail again on 6/15/08, there were five Bluebird eggs in box #12.



I was on vacation and couldn't monitor again until 6/27/08 when I found 9 Bluebird eggs in box #12! The only way I could explain this, was that two females were laying eggs in the same nest box. Maybe it was a mother and last year's daughter. That might explain why there was no rivalry between the two females. On July 4 there were eight nestlings about 2-3 days old and one infertile egg. I set up my video camera and documented two females and one male Bluebird feeding the nestlings. I could see that the Gilwood nest box was not going to be big enough for eight nestlings, so I built a bigger box, inside dimensions of 7.25" by 6.5" by 9 inches deep. I made two 1.5-inch holes in the front of the box. I thought it would be interesting to see if both holes would be used, maybe at the same time, and I did get pictures of this occurring. I hinged the roof of this box so I could take pictures more easily from the top.



On July 8, I moved the whole nest with nestlings to the larger box, on the same pole as the smaller box had been, and set up my video camera to be sure the parents would accept the new nest box. It showed that 5 ½

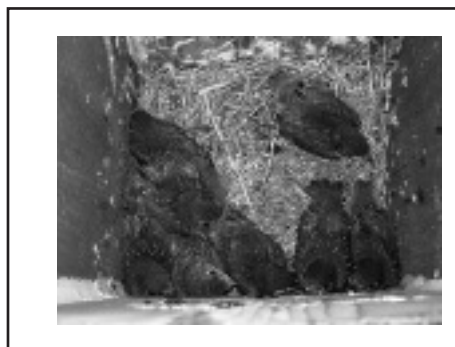
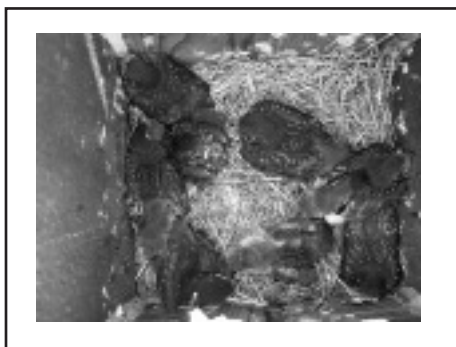


minutes after I moved the nestlings, one of the females flew to the top of the new box, and in less than 8 minutes, went in the box. It took about 19 minutes for the male to enter the new box. They accepted it! The nestlings were well cared for by the three parents. One nestling was smaller and seemed less developed than the others, so I watched it closely and took pictures daily. The picture taking did not disturb the nestlings. I was careful not to stay more than 2 minutes. They sat quietly and “froze” when the top was opened. I put the video camera out by the box on 7/11 and taped the parents feeding the nestlings 46 times in 69 minutes. The “runt” continued to grow quickly, and soon it could hardly be distinguished from its siblings.

On July 18, I checked the box, and six of the eight nestlings had fledged at 17 days of age. The remaining two nestlings fledged the next day, on July 19. I had my motion activated camera set up and did get a few pictures as the last two nestlings were sitting in the holes ready to fledge out in to the big world. It was like they were saying “good-bye” to me. On July 20 when I looked in the box, it was empty. All eight nestlings fledged successfully. As far as I know, this was the first documented case of two females nesting in one nest box. I am leaving the larger 2-hole box up where it is, to see if it is used again next year.

In 21 years, I have never bonded to any nest of Bluebirds as I did to this one. My Bluebird obsession went up several notches and I truly have “empty nest syndrome”! Many people at work, church, and home have followed the progress of these Bluebirds, and so they have increased Bluebird awareness, too.

My hope is that these fledglings survive to come back next year to start a new generation of Bluebirds. This is why Bluebirds get in your heart and never leave. I love happy endings!



What Is A Sparrow Spooker And How Do I Use One?

Before we get into what a sparrow spooker is, let's talk a little about what it is NOT. A sparrow spooker is not:

1. A substitute for monitoring
2. A substitute for year round trapping and disposing of sparrows, using cheap bird feed containing millet and cracked corn, or taking down unattended nest boxes which are occupied by sparrows.
3. A permanent means of keeping sparrows out of bluebird nest boxes
4. A substitute for proper placement of bluebird nest boxes AWAY from areas which are prone to sparrow inhabitation

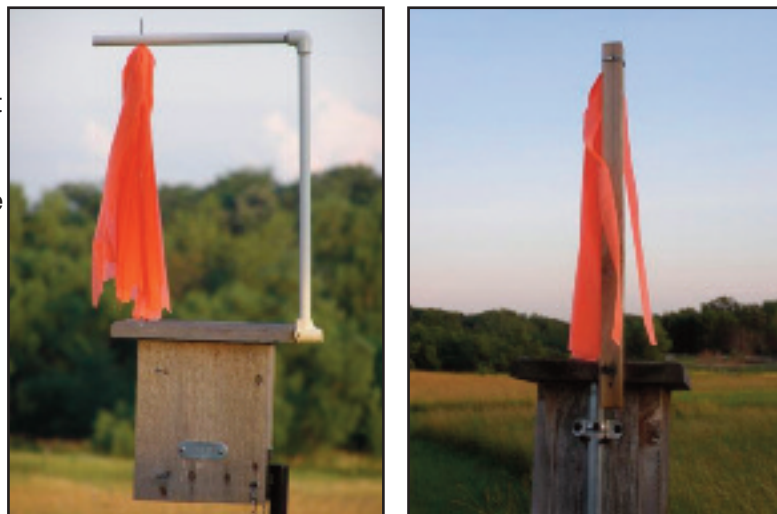
A sparrow spooker is a "TEMPORARY DETERRENT" which in many cases has proven effective in keeping sparrows from entering bluebird nest boxes IF, and ONLY if, it is used correctly. Another common name for a sparrow spooker is an orange flag due to the orange material from which the streamers are made. We really do not know exactly why or how a sparrow spooker works or why it helps to keep sparrows from entering a nest box. One theory is that the male sparrow loves to sit on top of his claimed home and sing to attract a mate. The fluttering of the streamers may serve as a sufficient irritant that it causes him to continue looking. Another theory is that the eyesight of seed eating birds may not be as keen as insect eating birds and the sparrow is uncomfortable maneuvering between the streamers waving in the wind. But for whatever reason, many bluebirders have reported a significant reduction in egg and chick losses from sparrows once they began using sparrow spookers in the correct way and at the correct time.

It is with some hesitation that we publish this information because these streamers are not effective if left up permanently or put on at the wrong time. We have some concern that they will be viewed as a "cure all" for sparrows and not used correctly, causing sparrows to become unaffected by them over time. But hopefully everyone reading this will use them correctly and this tool can help save bluebird eggs and chicks which would otherwise have been lost.

Pictured are two examples which have been used successfully by BBRP members. One is made from PVC piping with holes drilled in the cross piece so that the streamers hang down over the top of the box. The other is a simple piece of wood with the streamers at the top. Both utilize cotter pins to hold the streamers in place. The material in both examples is orange "crime scene tape" which can be purchased at a hardware store. The streamers are made from approximately 10 strips of orange tape of slightly different lengths which are bent in the middle and held together with a cotter pin. The strips of tape must be long enough so that they touch the top of the box or dangle slightly above the entrance hole. There are many variations of this basic design but the general premise is to provide multiple shiny or bright streamers suspended above the nest box. Some designs call for Mylar to be used, although we do not have experience with this material.

It is imperative that the streamers be used only as a temporary deterrent. Place them on the nest box after the first bluebird egg is laid. Remove them immediately after the first brood of chicks fledges. Replace the tape so that it is always a fresh, bright orange. Put the streamer back on the box when the first egg of the second clutch is laid and remove it again immediately after the chicks fledge. Streamers which remain in place for extended periods and become torn and faded ARE NOT effective and will not deter sparrows. Once sparrows become accustomed to them, the streamers will no longer work. For this reason, streamers must be viewed only as a temporary aid in deterring sparrows from entering the nest box only during occupancy by bluebirds. Long term sparrow management requires year round trapping and disposal of captured sparrows, refraining from feeding cheap bird seed containing millet and cracked corn, proper placement of bluebird boxes in areas which are not prone to sparrow infestation, and removing of unattended nest boxes which allow sparrows to reproduce. Sparrow spookers which are used correctly will not deter bluebirds from entering the nest box to care for eggs and chicks. They also will not deter house wrens.

Additional information regarding the construction, design, and use of sparrow spookers can be found at www.sialis.org and www.sparrowtraps.net/spookers.htm.





Need help or have suggestions? Call your County Coordinator!

If you are an active bluebirder, and would like to donate some of your time to help others help the bluebirds, the BBRP is looking for more county coordinators. If Interested, contact Carrol Johnson or Keith Radel for more information.

AITKIN Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953	DAKOTA Ralph Johnson Mendota Heights 651-457-4233	(S. ITASCA) Joan & Tom Nelson Hill City 612-414-0152	MILLE LACS Darlene Bemis Milaca 320-938-3838	ROCK Roger & Ruth Mary Jackson Hills 507-962-3303	Keith Radel Faribault 507-334-2491
(N. AITKIN) Joan & Tom Nelson Hill City 612-414-0152	Marlys Shirley Farmington 952-469-3510	(N. ITASCA) George & Kelly Reindl Duluth 218-626-1536	Jeremy Nyquist Isle 320-676-3121	SCOTT Evelyn Graber Prior Lake 952-440-7073	SWIFT Bill Hoberg Benson 320-843-3988
ANOKA Lara Newberger Andover 763-427-2817	FILLMORE Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433	JACKSON Dale Aden Okabena 507-853-4452	MORRISON Dave & Carol Fiedler Buffalo 763-682-4221	952-469-2054	WABASHA Don Mahle Plainview 507-534-3069 Carol & Dale Nibbe Lake City 651-345-2410
BELTRAMI Jim Schram Black Duck 218-835-4669	Mary Suttinger Chatfield 507-867-9118	KANABEC Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953	OLMSTED Lisa Storey Rochester 507-529-8082	SHERBURNE Wade Lovelette Elk River 763-441-2380	WADENA Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401
BENTON Gene & Betty Punsack Foley 320-963-6595	Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573	KANDIYOHI Ronald A. Erpelding Willmar 320-235-0788	Mary Suttinger Chatfield 507-867-9118	Jan Wallin Zimmerman 763-856-2950	WASECA Wally Swanson Waterville 507-362-8760
Bob & Sandy Rajkowski Rice 320-393-2909	GOODHUE Harlan Hostager Zumbroda 507-732-5631	LAKE Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047	Jeff Ward Julie Bjoraker Dover 507-876-2127	SIBLEY Harold Caster Belle Plaine 952-873-6366	Ester Vasey Sebekka 218-837-5259
BROWN Dominic Sellner Sleepy Eye 507-375-8737	HENNEPIN John Hauser Bloomington 952-831-8132	LE SUEUR Ben Bartusek New Prague 952-758-3398	OTTER TRAIL Dennis Barron Henning 218-583-4277	ST. LOUIS Dick Forsline Bloomington 952-835-6769	WASHINGTON Paul Diegnau Maplewood 651-766-4174
CARLTON Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953	Bob Hursh Edina 952-922-6527	LYON Rita & Dennis Engels Ghent 507-428-3554	PENNINGTON Dave & Diane Peterson Thief River Falls 218-681-7614	(N. ST. LOUIS) Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047	(S. WA.) Ted Tempest St. Paul 651-735-4171
CARVER Jeff Smith Excelsior 952-474-7776	Pete Meyer Mound 952-472-7449	(S. Lyon) Paul Rasmussen Russell 507-823-4731	Arlene Thune Thief River Falls 218-681-1740	(S. ST. LOUIS) George & Kelly Reindl Duluth 218-626-1536	WINONA Bill Nepper Winona 507-454-3263
CASS Al & Alice Lauer St. Cloud 320-240-9431	HOUSTON Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573	(S. Lyon) Elizabeth Murray Lynd 507-865-1529	POPE Bruce & Barb Mulvaney Glenwood 320-278-3763	STEARNS Bernard Meyer St. Cloud 320-252-4791	WRIGHT Dorene Scriven Minneapolis 612-922-4586
Ron Craven Pine River 218-587-5074	HUBBARD Ron Jensen Park Rapids 218-732-4205	MARSHALL Linda & Larry Johnson Warren 218-745-6622	RAMSEY Ken Yeager Arden Hills 651-484-5496	STEELE John Beal Faribault 507-451-2697	Mary Swenson Monticello 763-878-2702
CHISAGO Dick & Marlys Hjort Chisago City 651-257-2553	ISANTI Russ Krause Maple Grove 763-420-4428	MCLEOD Kevin Schram Plato 320-238-2467	RICE Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433		
CROW WING Mary Kalinoski Baxter 218-829-7552	ITASCA Noreene Vidal Wirt 218-659-2741	John Thompson Hutchinson 320-234-9664	Keith Radel Faribault 507-334-2491		
Darrell Stave Baxter 218-829-6939	Rick Blake Grand Rapids 218-327-3303				

Welcome!

To the new Fillmore & hOuston
County Coordinator!

Mike Jeresek

Where have all the Mealworms Gone?

Mealworms are big business in this country. We all know that our beautiful bluebirds relish them and eat them by the thousands each year. Mealworms are also the staple diet for many types of captive reptiles like geckos, chameleons, and bearded dragons. Reptiles consume them in a variety of sizes too – mini, small, medium, large, extra large. But the demand for mealworms does not stop there. Anglers use them as bait. Aquarists feed them to certain varieties of tank raised fish. They also provide food for pet Sugar gliders (a small species of gliding possum native to Australia). Wildlife rehabilitators rely on them as food for many varieties of birds and wildlife that will only eat insects. For them, this has truly been a matter of life and death. Mealworms also provide treats for domestic chickens, pheasants, and other fowl. Simply put, raising mealworms is big business and there is a huge demand for them as food for many types of birds and animals in this country each year.

Would anyone have ever thought the demand for meal worms would exceed the supply or that we would be facing a national mealworm shortage? We’ve all felt the pains of increased prices for gas and groceries but now mealworms too? Who would ever have thought? This year the nation’s top mealworm suppliers simply ran out and now we are faced with a mealworm crisis. Or at least it seems like a crisis to all the people who have been unable to find any – or find them at a reasonable price. The reasons for the mealworm shortage vary but it appears that there are a couple of main meal worm growers who provide worms to all of the other suppliers in the country and something has gone awry at the nations top meal worm farms. Up to 70% of the mealworms sold in the country may come from one mealworm farm and all of those worms are dying for unknown reasons. The suppliers start them and then suddenly they all die off. I guess you’d call it a crop failure at the mealworm farms.

Reports vary and the exact cause is unknown but speculation is that either something is wrong with the medium/grain/bran that the worms are raised in, a virus is killing the worms, or a parasite may have caused the mealworms to become sterile and unable to reproduce. Mealworms are raised in grain or bran and one report stated that a new strain of disease resistant wheat did not allow the meal worms to reproduce. One supplier indicated that for unknown reasons, the young mealworms have all been dying. It was suspected that something was wrong with the growing medium but the exact cause is still unknown. According to this supplier, they were 200 million worms behind in their orders. Now that’s a lot of worms!

And mealworms take awhile to grow. If the suppliers sold them when they were small, none would make it to the medium, large, or giant size. Once the first batch of mealworms finally reached adult size, they were still unable to be sold because they were needed for reproducing to keep the farms running. Reports seem to indicate that the crisis may be nearing an end and the mega worm farms are expecting to be fully operational by the end of July. Other reports say that it won’t be until September before we start seeing mealworms available in any large number or at the quality and price we have all become accustomed to. We may never know the exact cause of the mealworm shortage but we bluebirders are

not alone. If you Google “Mealworm Shortage” there are thousands of sites, threads, and blogs from people who raise reptiles, tropical fish, sugar gliders, or rehabilitate wildlife and all are lamenting the lack of mealworms.

Fortunately the shortage occurred at a time when wild insects were readily available for nesting bluebirds and probably did not cause any serious harm. The emotional damage to us humans who were unable to obtain worms for our beloved blues was probably more significant than it was for them bluebirds themselves. But this has been a serious matter for anyone who raises or rehabilitates birds and animals that were dependant on mealworms for food.

If you routinely feed mealworms to bluebirds, now may be the time to consider starting your own mealworm farm. Generally speaking, mealworms are easy to keep and raise. A “mealworm farm” can be established in a large plastic storage bin with a 1 inch medium of bran, cornmeal, chicken mash, or oat meal. (If using bran as the growing medium, it would be wise to use food-quality bran rather than the stuff used for animal food since problems in the bran may have caused the mealworm shortage) The container must be covered with screen or mesh to allow for ventilation. Keep the container in a warm, dark place. Provide food such as banana peels, dry cat food, sliced raw potatoes, or sliced apples. Do not add water to the container - moisture will be provided by the food source. Avoid food which is high in moisture as the medium must remain dry. The bottoms of egg cartons should be placed on top of the medium. This will allow the larva to crawl out of the medium for easier removal and a dark place for the adults to burry under and lay their eggs. Mealworms can be easily removed from the cups of the egg cartons for feeding. Remember that enough worms must reach adulthood and turn into beetles to lay eggs so that the cycle can continue and the farm remains productive.

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ATTENTION

April Conference Cookie Contributors!!!

There has been a request for the recipe for the delicious **CHOCOLATE DROP COOKIES** that were brought to the cookie table by someone! Please send us the recipe, if you would be so kind, and we will print it in the next newsletter for all that would like to give them a try. Especially interested is the one who was SO anxious to find the baker of these delicious cookies that day at conference, Marsh Johnson. Perhaps the chocolate cookie baker could call or write him at 4521 Heritage Hills Circle/ Plymouth, MN 55437 or phone number 952-831-6593. We hope to hear from you, our mystery chocolate cookie baker!!

Thank you!

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BBRP Mail Order Sales

After many years of dedication to BBRP and managing both our mail order sales and sales of bluebird items at the annual conference, Mary Kalinoski has retired. BBRP extends our heartfelt gratitude for the many hours Mary (and her sister Pam) devoted to finding unique and interesting bluebird items and for handling the sales of these items over the years. Without her assistance, these wonderful treasures would not be adorning our homes today. Filling her shoes will not be an easy task and at the present time we do not have a volunteer to take over the mail orders or sales items at the conference. As a result, the mail order sales have been temporarily discontinued. We are researching other possibilities such as a third party vendor to handle internet sales. We are also looking for someone who may have an interest in crafts and unique bluebird "stuff" and would be interested in assisting BBRP by handling the mail orders and conference sales. If anyone has time to volunteer and might be willing to assist us, please contact Lance Krog at lancek@frontiernet.net or 952-469-2054.

Thanks again Mary and Pam!

Check Your Expiration Dates

Just a little reminder to check the expiration date of your membership. The date is printed on your newsletter label. The 4 numbers above your name indicate the Month and Year that your membership will expire. For example: 06 09 would indicate an expiration of June, 2009. If the last 2 numbers are 99, this indicates a Lifetime membership. If your membership is nearing expiration (or has already expired), please renew so that your subscription to Bluebird News is not interrupted.



Photo by Lois Nissen

New Members

Cynthia Alsip	Inver Grove Heights
Joyce Benson	Prior Lake
Ron Bowen	Princeton
Rochelle Bultman	Northfield
Gary and Mary Carlson	Northfield
Linda Cichanowski	Winona
Becky Colin	Shawnee, KS
Marge Davis	Menomonee, WI
Laura Emmer	Prior Lake
Luella Gustafson	Vesta
Paul Hoversten	Lynd
Ken Hunter	Wilder
Tim and Julie Kiehne	Lanesboro
Phyllis Kohlmeyer	Caledonia
William (BJ) Meierhofer	Sauk Rapids
Charles and Susan Nelson	Duluth
Mary Peterson	Northfield
Trent Schumacher	Heron Lake
Chuck Schwantes	Prior Lake
Colleen Tell	Prior Lake
Donna Thaemlitz	Lakefield
Steve Toepfer	Oacoma, SD
Nancy Williams	No. Mankato
Jim Zimmerman	Onalaska, WI

New Lifetime Members

Roger Minch	Fargo, ND
Tony and Barb Nowak	Owatonna
Elizabeth Murray	Lynd

**Bluebird Recovery Program
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis**



**P.O. Box 984
Faribault, MN 55021**

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Upcoming Bluebird Informational meetings

Aug. 29, 30, 31, Information Booth - Rice County Steam & Gas Grounds—Dundas, MN (1 mile South of Northfield, MN on Hiway 3). Contacts: Rice Co. Coors—Carrol Johnson, (507) 664-9433 or Keith Radel (507)334-2491

Sept 20, 21- "Goods from the Woods" Info Booth and program—"How to attract Bluebirds and Keep them Safe" - IRA Civic Center, Grand Rapids, MN—Contact: Keith Radel, State Coor., (507)210-0961

Sept 27—12:30 pm—SE MN Bluebirders Potluck Picnic—Groen Park, Chatfield, MN—(Directions from only stoplight in Chatfield, 3rd & Main; Go South on 3rd to Groen Park on left. Barbeques and refreshments furnished. Please bring a dish to pass, salad, hot dish, or dessert, Door Prizes! Awards! Come join the fun and share your Bluebird stories!. Contact: Mary Suttinger, Olmsted Co. Coor, (507)867-9118.

Oct 11— 5:30 pm, Rice & Steele Co Potluck Picnic— River Bend Nature Center, 1000 Rustad Road, Faribault (SE corner of Faribault), Barbeques and beverages furnished, bring a salad, hot dish or dessert to pass, Door Prizes! Awards! Share the fun and your stories! Contacts: Loren "Murph" Murphy (507)334-7958 and Keith Radel (507)334-2491.

Oct 27—7:00 pm—Information Mtg for Lakes Area Birding Club, Detroit Lakes, MN, City Library at corner of Washington and Frazee. Contact: Bruce Besse, Club President, (218)847-1711

Oct 30—7:00 pm, Information Meeting, Rochester Community Education, Northrup Comm. Ed. Ctr., 201 8th St NW, Rochester, MN. Contact: Lisa Storey, Olmsted Co. Coor. ((507)529-8082.

April 18, 2009—State Bluebird Conference!! Location TBD

*Our Mission:
"To encourage, inspire, educate and assist individuals and organizations to become actively involved in the restoration and preservation efforts to sustain a healthy and expanding population of bluebirds and other native cavity nesters."*



Only current BBRP paid members continue to receive the newsletter. Please check the expiration date of your current membership on the address label.

Submit articles, trail tips or pictures to:
editor@bbrp.org
General Information about BBRP:
info@bbrp.org
Or call: 952-469-2054