



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations"

Bluebird News



Volume 29 Issue 4

Fall 2019

Keeping Birds Safe by Virginia Windschitl

Danger of Windows

A recent study was released analyzing bird-building collisions in downtown Minneapolis, looking at 21 buildings, including the U.S. Bank stadium during two migrations seasons. The stadium and three other unidentified buildings were involved in 74% of bird collisions and 68% of bird fatalities among the buildings studied. An estimated 111 bird fatalities occurred annually at the stadium. The study was led by Scott Loss, an Oklahoma State University associate professor and nationally recognized bird expert. Audubon Minnesota and U of M scientists also are listed as authors. The study was paid for by the Vikings and the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA).

Three problems increasing bird deaths from windows were highlighted in the study: lighting in and around buildings at night, expanses of reflective glass, and vegetation near glass that causes birds to see trees reflected and believe they're flying into habitat.

The problems of bird-window collisions should also be a concern for homeowners. Half of all fatalities from window deaths are from private homes. These days with patio doors and large picture windows there are things we can do to make our yards safer for the birds we enjoy watching in our neighborhoods. Even small

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windows can cause bird deaths.

Please check out this website:

<https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>

The American Bird Conservancy has created a flyer showing ways to keep birds from colliding with windows. They include applying Tempera paint in squiggly lines or using decals available from various sources that can break up reflections enough so that the birds see the glass. Tempera paint is a washable, long-lasting, and non-toxic solution to preventing bird/window collisions.

Other suggestions are tape, window films, inside or out, "glass

wax" or light-weight netting along with prefabricated decals.

Danger of open pipes

Open metal or PVC pipes are deathtraps for birds and other small wildlife. Cavity-nesting birds often enter pipes thinking they are suitable for nesting or roosting. Once inside a bird cannot extend its wings to fly out and smooth sides make escape by climbing out impossible. The birds end up at the bottom of the pipe, where they die a slow, agonizing death from starvation, dehydration, and exposure.

Open vertical pipes occur in more places than you might think, including fence posts, sign posts, building roofs, irrigation vents, unused chimneys.

Fortunately, there are simple solutions to the hazards posed by open vertical pipes. Look for pipes on your property and in public places, and take (or suggest to the proper authorities) one of the following actions:

- Remove any pipes that are not serving a useful purpose.
- Put caps or screens on pipes that cannot be removed. The cap or cover does not have to be expensive, but it does need to be secure and not easily dislodged by the wind or other disturbance.
- Fill pipes to the top with dirt, rocks, or concrete.

Continued on Page 2

Keeping Birds Safe, continued

For more information go to California Audubon's site: https://ca.audubon.org/sites/default/files/work-lands_open_pipes_040110.pdf

Other sites to check:

<https://www.fws.gov/cno/conservation/migratory-birds/deathbypipes-final.pdf>

https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/lwm/aem/docs/olson/audubon_kern_river_preserve_death_pipes.pdf

Danger of String and Fishing Lines

String can become tangled around birds' necks, wings or legs and cut off circulation. Baby birds can become entangled in inappropriate nesting materials.

Some examples are fishing lines, dental floss, package ribbon, balloon and kite string, yarn, Easter grass. Any man-made string is generally too strong to easily break, causing tragic consequences when wildlife becomes entangled in it. Even some "natural" materials such as long human hair and long strands of sisal or jute twine can cause injury.

Bluebirds generally use just grass in their nests but sometimes they will find inappropriate materials. Fortunately, because bluebirders monitor their nests, we can watch for inappropriate nesting material before it causes a problem. Other birds, especially those high in the trees, do not have that advantage.

People sometimes put out yarn scraps or other man-made materials thinking it will be good nesting material for the birds, but this is not recommended. Carolina Waterfowl Rescue on a Facebook page recommended the following: "If you want to have nesting materials in your yard, we suggest purchasing pre-made nesting material or use these natural alternatives:

- Small Yard Debris: Pine straw, wheat straw, and tiny twigs make good bird nest building materials.
- Grass Clippings: One of the most common nesting materials, grass clippings can be gathered into balls or simply left mulched into your lawn.
- Animal Hair: If you brush or clip your animals, save the fur! It makes a wonderfully soft lining for bird nests. Just don't use any hair or fur that's been treated with flea dips or insect repellents.
- Cocoa Fiber: Recycle worn-out linings of hanging baskets for bird nesting material.

The most important thing to remember is to use

natural items that have not been exposed to dangerous chemicals. Another item that is commonly put out is dryer lint. This should also be avoided because it can absorb water and contain harsh detergents and fabric softeners."

Sources:

- Bird study: U.S. Bank Stadium among downtown Minneapolis buildings involved in high proportion of deadly collisions; groundbreaking study finds key causes, culprits in bird deaths, by Rochelle Olson, Minneapolis Star Tribune, November 7, 2019
- American Bird Conservancy website
- Protect Birds from Open Pipes, by Scott W. Gillihan, NABS "Bluebird", Summer 2012
- Strings Are Dangerous to Birds, by Susan Bulger, NABS "Bluebird", Summer 2017 (old editions of "Bluebird" can be found online at the North American Bluebird Society website)
- <https://www.audubon.org/news/what-nesting-materials-are-safe-birds>
- <https://www.everythingbirds.com/articles/please-dont-give-birds-these-nesting-materials/>

Notes from the Field

Trail Improvements

With the tough 2019 bluebird season behind me I have been busy making a few changes to my trail that I hope will improve my 39 site trail for the 2020 season. Some of those improvements include: moving a few boxes to hopefully better sites, also I have installed Keith Radel's "spinner system" to three of my boxes that had dead chicks in them due to wet nests.

Now is a great time to do improvements to your trail while problems are fresh in your mind.

Mike Jeresek



Photos by Doris Glander

14th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic By Mary C. Bailey

On Saturday, September 21, nearly twenty bluebirders gathered for the 14th Annual Southeast Minnesota Bluebirders' Picnic. The barbecue lunch was hosted by Bill & Mary Bailey and the attendees added to the tables of tasty dishes. During the meal the bluebirders shared tales of their bluebird season and spoke of the challenges of wren and buffalo gnat predation.

Later, numbers were drawn for door prizes, and the "100 Club" patches were awarded. The weather was never a consideration because we met at the Chatfield United Methodist Church in their fellowship hall, thanks to the courtesy of Rev. Deb Collum, pastor and longtime bluebirder.



Bluebirders enjoy a tasty potluck meal at the 14th Annual SE MN Bluebirders Picnic.



"100 Patches" were awarded to (L to R): Quint Lohse, Vince & Laura Mangan, Bill & Mary Bailey, Mike Jurasek. Not pictured: Don Johnson, Vince Olson.

Looking Forward to 2020 Expo - Remembering Lance Krog and His Family, By Jeanie Mortenson

Our April 18th, 2020 Expo is pretty much finalized. Mike Sandberg and I now have the program agenda all set up. We have a variety of great speakers with a wealth of knowledge and lots of variety. We will be back at Cannon Falls High School which is a great venue for us. The registration form will be coming out in our winter 2020 Newsletter. You can register on line or mail them to me. I always enjoy getting the registration letters, it's like opening up Christmas Cards. It is always fun to see who is coming to enjoy the day with us; we always enjoy seeing everyone each year. There are so many friendships made over the years.

This summer there was an article in our newsletter that Lance Krog wrote many years ago. Lance was Chairman of BBRP for many years and was Editor of our newsletter. He was also one of our speakers at our Expo talking about Purple Martins. He had many of the gourd type houses in his yard and raised lots of Purple Martins. He also monitored many bluebird trails in Ritter Park and other areas. He raised miniature goats, showed them at the Minnesota State Fair and received many ribbons. Lance passed away 8 years ago at the age of 50 due to pancreatic cancer. His dad Dale passed away in August and Lance's mother emailed me that there was \$125.00 given in Dale's memorial to BBRP. We want to thank Karen and Carla's family for this generous gift to BBRP, it is greatly appreciated.

Have a very Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays, we'll see you in April at the Expo.

Jeanie Mortenson, Expo Chair, Mike Sandberg and Glen Shirley, Expo Committee

17th Annual South Central Minnesota Bluebird Picnic 2019

Bluebirders from the area met at the Riverbend Nature Center in Faribault MN on Saturday, September 28th. We had a delicious meal with everyone bringing a contribution of their favorite dish.

BBQ's, buns, condiments, pickles and potato chips were provided. Thank you to The State Bank of Faribault for donating the hamburger from Carlander Cattle Company used for the BBQ's. Faribault HyVee donated \$25 toward the essentials needed such as paper products, condiments and groceries. Fareway of Faribault donated \$25 toward hamburger buns from their bakery used for the sandwiches. Thank you for your donations to our picnic. It was very much appreciated.

"100 Club" members were given their Bars for the 2019 year and a discussion of year end trail results followed. Door prizes were drawn and we all enjoyed the evening with our Bluebird friends.

Thank You, Murph and Ardy

Experimental Gnat Control for Bluebird Houses, by Don Johnson (bzjdj@aceegroup.cc)

This past summer, as I think you have all experienced, was another terrible summer battling the persistent biting gnats troubling and killing our bluebird chicks.

With 39 boxes to monitor (two hours total time) I felt it was time to experiment with the following use of vanilla scented candles inside my bluebird houses. The first bluebird hatch did not go well for me as I was losing chicks regularly to the gnats. It was July 2nd when I installed the candles into the bluebird houses. From that time forward I had no chick losses to gnats. Wrens and sparrows are another story however!

I use Gilwood style houses mounted on a Gilbertson conduit/re-rod mounting system. I do not foresee any issues in installing the candles in other housing styles.

Procedure

Materials used:

*CandleNScent vanilla tea light candles (30 pk) \$8.80 @ Amazon

*Gorilla Heavy Duty double sided mounting tape (1"x60") \$6.97 @ Amazon

1. Curl the small lip of aluminum over onto candle surface so it does not warm and drop out of the holder when suspended from the house ceiling.
2. Attach a 1" piece of Gorilla tape to the aluminum of the candle holder.
3. Attach candle holder to the inside roof of bluebird house. Follow directions on tape package to insure that tape adheres to both inside roof and candle.

When monitoring boxes I still spray vanilla onto the chicks as well as nesting materials and the wood interior. The difference with the candles however is now when I return to monitor the box a week later I am now welcomed to the scent of vanilla when I open the door. The warmer the weather, the stronger the vanilla expelled from the candle into the bluebird house.

BBRP – Public Lands – Bluebird Nest Box Program

The Bluebird Recovery Program of MN to further its mission of "Education and Outreach" is offering to nature centers, preserves, schools, city, county/regional and state parks with established and supervised bluebird programs, the opportunity to apply for a donation of new nest boxes for expansion or replacements on their Bluebird trail(s). All nest boxes given out will be Gilbertson – PVC boxes.

Applications will be accepted until February 1st of each year with nest boxes being distributed on an annual basis in March to those facilities chosen by the BBRP Nest Box Program application review committee. Application forms are available on the BBRP.org website.

The applicant is required to insure trail monitoring is done throughout the nesting season and year-end trail reporting is submitted to BBRP.org annually. If this is not done nest boxes will be reclaimed by BBRP.



Photos by Doris Glander

Editor's Corner

We had a board meeting recently and it is good to hear that the agenda is all set for the Expo next spring. We have a lot of reports sent in for this nesting season. If you have not reported yet there is still time (even past our deadline.) I said I had not reported because all I had were tree swallows in my 6 boxes but the others on the board said I still should report to give a better idea of how the season went.

I attended the Fall Picnic at Riverbend Nature Center in Faribault at the end of September. Murph and Ardy have organized this for many years and did a wonderful job, as usual. The nature center is planning to start charging for events like this and Murph and Ardy have decided that this was the last one that they will organize. They are hoping someone else can take over the planning this event in the future. Contact the board if you would have interest in planning a picnic in the Northfield/Faribault area next fall. It is a good time to share your successes and frustrations and learn from each other and the board hopes it will continue at some other venue.

If you have any ideas for stories or interesting anecdotes about your trail or bluebird photos be sure to send them to me at edbbnews@outlook.com.

"Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we will say our work is finished." --Rachel Carson

Wishing you a great holiday season with your friends and family, Virginia Windschitl



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

MINNESOTA MASTER NATURALIST

The Minnesota Master Naturalist program, what is it, whose involved, what do they do?

For starters they've contributed over 700 hours to BBRP in 2018 and 2019, primarily monitoring bluebird trails in parks and nature centers around the state. Some also contribute time to the BBRP board and the annual Expo conference.

So what is the program all about? The mission of the Minnesota Master Naturalist Program is to promote awareness, understanding, and stewardship of Minnesota's natural environment by developing a corps of well-informed citizens dedicated to conservation education and service within their communities.

Any adult who is curious and enjoys learning about the natural world, shares that knowledge with others, and supports conservation can be a Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteer. If you enjoy hiking, bird watching, following tracks, or identifying wildflowers, you'll love being a Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteer. Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteers are a motivated group of fun and interesting people: teachers, retired professionals, nature guides, hunters, eco-tour operators, farmers, and...YOU!

A Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteer Training Course consists of 40 hours of in-classroom training. The classroom training includes a variety of teaching methods—lectures, PowerPoints, hands-on activities, videos, and field trips that provide the participants with information on Minnesota's natural history. The course is designed to be a general overview of Minnesota's three biomes. Each class series focuses on one of the three biomes: Big Woods, Big Rivers; Prairies and Potholes; and North Woods, Great Lakes.

BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROGRAM MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT & RENEWAL

Enrollment in the Bluebird Recovery Program includes: initial Information Packet containing a full color Trail Guide, Top Ten Tips including colored Nest Guide, Record Keeping booklet, Pole Assembly instruction sheet, yearly Report Form & quarterly Newsletter. There are also annual informational meetings and a yearly Bluebird Expo. Consultation and advice are available by phone, e-mail, correspondence or in the field.

Enrollment contributions are **tax deductible**.

_____ New Member Renewal _____

Membership periods are:

_____ 2 years \$23.00 _____ 5 years \$55.00 _____ Lifetime \$150.00

_____ * Gift Membership * - indicate amount & period of gift _____



*Bringain back Bluebirds
for Future Generations!*

Member Name _____ E-mail _____

Address _____ County _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

* If giving a Gift Membership, please provide your name so that the recipient can be informed of your generosity. _____

Send to:

Bluebird Recovery Program, c/o Brianna Frisch
11018n Taylor Hill Road, Minnieska MN 55910

The Big Woods, Big Rivers make a diagonal sash across the state of Minnesota, starting at the Northwest corner of the state with a narrow band and widening out in the southeast. It is a portion of the greater Eastern Broadleaf Forest taking in approximately 12 million acres of the state. The Tallgrass Aspen Parklands in the northwest corner of the state are included in this biome within the Minnesota Master Naturalist Program. The Tallgrass Aspen Parklands, are a cold and dry region that forms a transition between the prairie to the west and the coniferous boreal forest to the east. The biome comprises about 3 million acres in our state.

Next is the biome called the Prairies & Potholes, also known as the Prairie Parkland Province. This biome was historically composed mainly of tallgrass prairie. Today it is used for agricultural purposes. The glaciers deposited between 100 and 600 feet of drift over the entire region. The Prairies & Potholes biome covers just over 16 million acres on the western edge of the state.

The third biome called the North Woods, Great Lakes is the Laurentian Mixed Forest. It is the largest biome in the state covering approximately 23 million acres in the northeast portion of Minnesota. The region contains many lakes, and the landscape ranges from swamps and bogs to exposed bedrock.

Following the completion of the training course, Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteers will be expected to complete 40 hours of volunteer service per year to be considered an active Master Naturalist. There are four basic areas of service:

- Stewardship Projects—these projects would involve natural resource management activities such as invasive species removal or restoration projects.
- Education/Interpretive Projects—these projects would be public presentations of natural resource information, educational materials development, or leading hikes.
- Citizen Science Projects—these projects would focus on volunteers gathering data and returning it to researchers to support the research projects. Examples would include Monarch larval monitoring, plant or animal counts, or water quality monitoring.
- Program Support—these projects include working in a store or office of the Minnesota Master Naturalist or sponsor or serving as a local chapter organizer.

You will be certified in the biome that you take, you need only take one biome to be considered a Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteer. However taking all three courses will provide you with a wealth of knowledge about Minnesota's natural world. Not only do Master Naturalist Volunteers aid BBRP in its mission, you may also find them assisting DNR naturalists in educational programming in one of our many State parks, helping the National Park Service plant trees along the Mississippi River in Twin Cities parks or doing stream and lake water quality testing throughout the summer for the MN Pollution Control Agency.

If this article has peaked your interest in the Master Naturalist program go to www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org, for more information. You can also look for the MN Master Naturalist table at the 2020 Expo in Cannon Falls next April. A special "Thank You" to all the MN Master Naturalist volunteers who currently give time to BBRP!

Submitted by David Schmidt with information provided by the MN Master Naturalist website.



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, State Coordinator, at 507-664-9433 or mnbluebirder@hotmail.com for more information.

AITKIN Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953	DAKOTA David Schmidt Inver Grove Heights 651-457-9195	Pete Meyer Mound 952-472-7449	LYON (S. Lyon) Paul Rasmussen Russell 507-823-4731	Fern & Ken Vesledahl Nerstrand 507-645-8610	WASECA Wally Swanson Waterville 507-362-8760
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Photo by Doris Glander

Upcoming Events

December 1, 2019

Trail Reports for the 2019 Nesting Season Due

April 18, 2020 – Saturday

Bluebird Expo

Cannon Falls, MN

*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."*



Photos by Doris Glander

Thank you to everyone who wrote articles, provided photographs or helped with the mailing of this publication of the Bluebird News.