



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations"

Bluebird News



Volume 29 Issue 2

Spring 2019

2019 Bluebird Expo Summary, submitted by Jeanie Mortenson

Happy Spring to you all!

As I sit at my computer typing my article for the Newsletter it is snowing. We've had thunder, snow, rain, sleet... you name it, we've had it. I had to run downtown and have my driver's license renewed. The visibility was so bad I could hardly see, plus it was so slippery. I had to run and get groceries, and when I came out of the store it was snowing so much it was hard to figure out whose car was whose, they were all covered with snow. I was so thankful we didn't get this stuff last weekend for our Expo. The beautiful springs we used to have were so nice, now it seems like we go from winter into summer. It seems like each year when the beautiful tulips start to bloom we get a snowstorm.

I want to thank all of you who attended our 2019 Expo at Cannon Falls. The weather was so nice and it just was such a happy day. It was so good to see all of you again, and also meet the new people who attended. Keith said during his part of the program, when he asked if this was their first Expo, a lot of hands went up. I had lots of calls and emails inquiring about it, so thanks so much for attending. If you attend the Expo each year, you will make some really good friends there. We have the nicest people coming to the Expo.

I would like to thank all of our outstanding speakers this year:

*Keith Radel does such a good job explaining the right way to do bluebirding, from setting up a trail to increasing fledging rates. In 1986 he put up his first Bluebird nest boxes, 25 nest boxes on 5 acres and fledged zero birds. Over 30 years (consecutively) he has totaled 13,148 bluebirds. He has

POINTS OF INTEREST

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come a long way since he put up the first houses.

*Al Batt always entertains us with his knowledge of birds and animals and makes us all laugh. He leads bird watching groups all over the world, writes four weekly humor and nature columns for many newspapers and does a show three times per week about nature on a number of radio stations. He is a columnist for Bird Watcher's Digest magazine, and writes a number of popular cartoon strips that are syndicated nationally. His latest book is "A Life gone to the Birds."

*Jim Gilbert is on WCCO radio each Sunday morning at 7:10 am with his Nature Notes. He's been observing nature and weather for over 30 years of Minnesota seasons and recording with accuracy. He is a retired teacher from Hopkins High School and Gustavus Adolphus College. I bought his Weather Guide Environment Calen-

dar and Almanac, and found it very interesting. Jim has provided phenology information for the calendar since 1977.

*Ryan Saulsbury, who is a member of Minnesota Lyme Association, spoke on this horrible problem caused by ticks. This group is working to make people more aware of the risk of Lyme disease and other diseases spread by ticks to people and our pets. When I initially contacted the representative and explained about BBRP he said this will be a great group to talk to. This gentleman couldn't be our speaker on the date of our Expo but said he had a great guy to do the job. Ryan is a teacher at Pillager, married with two children and very busy with his family and sports. He found out he had Lyme disease in 2012. He said it was a horrible day because his mom passed away that day also. He explained about all the symptoms and handed out a sheet titled "Symptom Checklist: Lyme Disease." This disease can create so many problems and cause so much damage and this is all from a little tick. I've had so many calls on this speaker about all the information given on this topic.

*David Schmidt spoke on "Weekly Bluebird Monitoring Made Simple, Make Year-end Reporting Even Simpler" which was so helpful. David is a Master Naturalist from Inver Grove Heights and he coordinates volunteers who monitor trails at several sites in Dakota County. David, one of our new Board Members, is so knowledgeable about so many different things. I can't thank him enough, because he lined up all the non-profit people who were at the Expo.

2019 Bluebird Expo Summary – Continued

Congratulations go to Gary and Barb Drentlaw of Northfield for the Bluebirder of the Year Award. We had an outstanding Silent Auction this year. I would like to thank all the wonderful people who donated to us in goods and money: Mike Jeresek, Joan Schulz, Steve & Cheryl Eno, Linda McGinty, Mary Elling, Mary Roen, Kim and Stacy Kistro, Kari Moline, Bob and Jeanne Walz, Marlys and Glen Shirley, Mary Kalinoski, Rudy Luther Automotive, Virginia Windschitl, the Odegard Family, Pam Sundsmo, Arlene Kjar, Jim Hume-niuk, Lynn Glesne, JoAnn Adelman, Sheila Smisek, Jeanie Mortenson, David Schmidt, Dean Rust, Sharon Lein, Roy Anderson, Bruce Smisek, Mike Sandberg, Mike O'Brien, Vincent and Laura Mangan, J. Her-man and Marilyn Yates, Alan Hale, Len Ourdadnik, Marilyn Suter, Burt and Vi Ackerman, Jill Parry Schmidt, Ann Cathcart, and Wally Swanson. I hope I haven't forgot-ten anyone. If so, please email me so I can acknowledge you in the next Newsletter. It is so appreci-ated, you don't have any idea how much it helps.

I also want to thank Joan

Schulz for taking the pictures at the Expo for us. She does a great job with her camera trying to make us look good. A very big thank you to Steve Malecha and Janice Borg. They brought in the big coffee pots, made coffee, got all the cups, nap-kins and plates for serving the cookies, they were indispensable. Steve helped set up and take down at the Expo, and helped line up custodians the night of set up. Thanks to Linda McGinty for the beautiful vase of flowers for the registration table and all the special things she did for us; McLeah and Charles Follen for boarding our trailer; Mike Sandberg for being our Moderator, he did such a great job; Diane Dembosky and Carl Morten-son for running the silent auction tables; Mary Kalinoski and Virginia Windschitl for helping set up the silent auction table on Friday night; Ken Vesledahl, Carrol Johnson, and Wally Swanson for the informa-tion tables; Winnie Johnson and Marlys Shirley, our cookie ladies; Arna Farmer's Catering from Farib-ault who did the delicious lunch for us; Brianna Frisch, our Membership Chair; David Schmidt for helping Brianna and me at the membership

and registration table; and last but not least, Glen Shirley and Mike Sandberg for being on the Expo Committee. You guys are the great-est. Also, the drawing of the blue-bird on the cover of the program was done by Mike Sandberg's grandson, Auden Cole who is 15. Mike suggested we have an Art Cover Contest for kids under 18 for the next Expo. If you have any child in your family who would like to enter, submit a drawing before Feb-ruary 2020 and the Committee will select one for next year. Also, in order to keep the Silent Auction going we could use some more help with that. If you are interested let us know. You can email to jeanieandcarl@hotmail.com.

For the 2020 Expo we will be back in Cannon Falls and the date will be April 18. It is such a great venue for us. Thanks again for all of your support for us throughout the year. It is greatly appreciated. Have a great spring and summer and I hope it is a good bluebird year.

Jeanie Mortenson, chair of BBRP Expo, Mike Sandberg and Glen Shirley, Committee members



Keith Radel



Mike Sandberg



Ryan Saulsbury



David Schmidt



Jim Gilbert



Al Batt

2019 Bluebird Expo Summary – Continued



Wally Swanson



Jim Stengel,
Redheaded Woodpecker Recovery



Jim Gilbert talking with Paul Schutte



Sara Klasky,
MN Master Naturalists



Lyme Disease discussion



Mike Sandberg & Ryan Saulsbury



Jim Gilbert talking with guest



Brianna Frisch
Jeanie Mortenson
David Schmidt
Virginia Windschitl



Weekly monitoring discussion



Back Row: Glen Shirley, Brianna Frisch, Carrol Johnson, Bruce Smisek, Wally Swanson, Jeanie Mortenson, Marilyn Suter
Front Row: Mike Sandberg, Virginia Windschitl, Marlys Shirley, David Schmidt



Mike Sandberg & Jim Gilbert



Teresa Root, Monarch Lab

Expo & Bluebird Photos taken by
Joan Schulz



Photo on
left taken
by Murph

News from Northern Minnesota, by Beth Urban, North St Louis County Coordinator

Two hours north of Duluth, way up North, there is a community that is well known for its cold weather! My husband Andy and I moved nearby to Eagles Nest Township in 2004. That June we went to the Timber Hall in Embarrass for the Finn Fest and discovered Nelimark Homestead. Ever since then we eagerly anticipate winter to end and activities to begin at Nelimark! Volunteers take care of the house and grounds to preserve Finnish Heritage and sell baked goods, crafts, books, and antiques. Some of the volunteers are not Finnish, but they all demonstrate SISU. (A noun meaning extraordinary endurance in the face of adversity, persistence, resolve, an indomitable spirit.)

When Andy and I monitor our nest box circle trail from Eagles Nest to Ely to Babbitt, we end up in Embarrass at Nelimark for coffee, treats, and conversation. We always feel welcomed! Of course, we share our bluebird stories with the folks. In fact,



several people wanted boxes in their yards, so we placed a pair of Gilbertson boxes in each of three yards nearby Nelimark. Bluebirds found two of the three sites! In the last few years we have fledged five bluebirds from each site. Last June our granddaughter, Imeeka, helped us check these boxes. (See photos)

Enthusiasm and interest blossomed. We were asked to give a program last September sharing information and our experiences with nest boxes. A good group of adults, teens, and children came to Nelimark to learn about bluebirds, tree swallows, and chickadees, all nest box residents. (See photos) In the thirteen years we have observed our trails up here only two times did bluebirds have a second nesting. Our season is short, mid-May to mid-July.

As Bluebirders we, who monitor nest boxes, must

EXPLANATION OF "SITE" WHEN USED IN BBRP MEMBER REPORTS by Marlys Shirley, BBRP Secretary

The word SITE is referred to in the dictionary as "the place where something is; location." This is the same use of the word we use in BBRP when describing where we place a bluebird box. When we ask, for example, "How many bluebird SITES do you have?", we mean upon how many locations have you placed bluebird boxes.

Upon a SITE, the bluebirder may place one single box on its pole; or, upon a SITE, the bluebirder may place TWO bluebird boxes, 12 feet apart, on their poles. This is often done as a recommendation for successful bluebird nesting so that if a tree swallow or other box nesting bird takes a house, there is still one for the bluebird to take and be successful in its nesting.

So, how does this affect your reporting of your nesting success at the end of the season? We do not expect that two pairs of bluebirds will inhabit the SITES with two nest boxes at the same time. That is ONE SITE with two boxes. Therefore, when we calculate your nesting rate we divide your total number of bluebird fledglings by the total number of SITES that you have, whether they are single boxes or paired boxes. We on the board hope that this explanation of SITE will help make your reporting clear and easily done. There may be a report box on number of SINGLE BOX SITES and PAIRED BOX SITES, and this is not to be confused with reporting your number of fledglings.

10 Myths About Bluebirds and Reasons They Do Not Nest Successfully

By Lance Krog (Reprinted from BBRP Bluebird News, July 2007)

1. Bluebirds were on the brink of extinction but have now recovered and do not need your help anymore. FALSE

By 1970, the bluebird population had declined significantly (some estimate up to 90% decrease) because of lack of habitat and nesting cavities, competition from non-native species such as house sparrows and starlings, and increased pesticide use. While the bluebird population has increased significantly since 1980 due to conservation efforts, the reasons which initially caused the decline have not gone away. Non-native house sparrows and starlings continue to compete for nesting locations (as do native tree swallows and house wrens). Housing developments continue to replace prime bluebird habitat. Removal of dead trees and wood fence posts continue to decrease the availability of natural nesting cavities. Without the help of people like you, the bluebird will continue to face difficulty surviving and nesting successfully.

2. Bluebirds live in trees. Bluebirds used to nest in natural cavities in dead trees and fence posts. So, bluebird boxes should be mounted on trees or fence posts. FALSE

The bluebird is an inhabitant of the open prairie. Nest boxes mounted on trees are much more likely to attract other birds than they are to attract bluebirds. While bluebirds did once nest in natural cavities in trees and fence posts, these locations have become unsafe due to predation by raccoons, and competition from non-native species. Bluebird nest boxes must be mounted on safe, predator-proof poles in open grassy areas away from brush and multiple trees.

3. I can put up a nest box and forget about it. That's the natural way of things and whatever happens is what's meant to be. FALSE

Bluebird nest boxes must be monitored at least once weekly to check on progress and to control house sparrows, mice, ants, blow flies, wasps, and to remove unhatched eggs and dead chicks. Monitoring also includes keeping the box itself in good repair by sealing or replacing cracked or broken parts.

4. The parents will abandon their nest if you open the nest box and touch the eggs or chicks. FALSE

Touching the eggs and chicks will not cause the birds to leave. This is an old fallacy which was probably told to children by their mother to keep them from harassing nesting birds. Bluebirds are very tolerant of human presence and extremely loyal to their nest, eggs, and young.

5. Bluebirds will remove old nests from the nest box so it's not necessary to clean them out. Cleaning them out at the end of the season is sufficient. FALSE

Bluebirds will not typically clean out an old nest and do not excavate their own cavity. While they may build a new nest on top of an existing one, this promotes disease and parasite infestation and may increase the likelihood that a predator will be able to reach inside to grab eggs and chicks that are closer to the entrance hole. Dirty nests attract ants. Bluebird boxes should be cleaned out as soon as the young have fledged to allow a clean and healthy home for a second nesting.

6. I never had problems with predators in the past so it's not likely that I will in the future. FALSE

It may take time for a bluebird trail to be discovered by raccoons, cats, and other predators. But once they discover an easy meal, they will continue coming to dinner. All it takes is one raccoon to discover the trail and an entire season of bluebird chicks and eggs (and possibly nesting adults too) may be destroyed. Always install bluebird nest boxes on predator resistant smooth metal poles which are sanded and waxed at least once annually, or use pole baffles/guards to prevent predators from gaining access to the nest.

7. Any nest box that says "Bluebird" on it will be adequate. FALSE

There are many types of nest boxes sold every year with the name Bluebird on them. Many of them are entirely inadequate as they cannot be opened for monitoring, can only be opened by removing the floor, are assembled with staples and/or low-quality products, or do not contain appropriate interior dimensions or entrance holes. BBRP recommends the following 5 nest box styles: Gilbertson PVC, Peterson, Modified Gilwood, Troyer, and NABS. These 5 styles have been used and tested for a number of years and contain the features which allow for proper monitoring and make for the greatest nesting success.

8. We should not mess with nature. House sparrows are birds too and if they nest in bluebird houses, we should leave them alone. FALSE

House sparrows are probably the #1 enemy of bluebirds. They are invasive, non-native species (so nature has already been messed with) which destroys bluebird eggs, and will kill chicks and adult bluebirds. House sparrows are not protected by federal law. House sparrow nests, eggs, chicks, and adults must be removed and destroyed to provide safety for the bluebird. It is better to have no box at all than to allow house sparrows to reproduce in them.

9. If I don't get bluebirds the first year, I never will and should give up – OR – it's too late in the season to install a nest box because they've already started nesting. FALSE

Patience is a virtue and it definitely applies to bluebirding. Do not be discouraged if bluebirds do not choose your nest box the first year or even for the first nest of the year. Nest boxes which are not occupied for the first nesting may be used for the second brood. It is never too late to install a nest box. Even if it is not used this season, migrating birds may see and remember it in the fall. Bluebirds which nest unsuccessfully in one location may leave to find a new home before nesting again. If you use appropriate box styles and have them set in the correct habitat, the bluebirds will eventually come.

10. House wrens and bluebirds are compatible and will peacefully nest side by side. FALSE

House wrens typically inhabit areas with high tree coverage or dense brush. Bluebirds are residents of the open prairie. Occasionally their habitats will overlap. Male house wrens are territorial and search out every available nesting site within their range. The male claims the site as his by placing several sticks inside. Later the female will select one of these cavities in which to make her nest. While the male is claiming all available cavities as his he will destroy and remove the eggs of other birds which have already taken up occupancy. For the safety of the bluebird, do not place their nest boxes in wren habitat and do not attempt to attract both house wrens and bluebirds. If you enjoy attracting house wrens, it is best to focus on just them and allow the bluebirds to safely nest elsewhere.

Bluebirds and Forests? A Connection by Mary Bailey

On July 24, 2019, the Ninth Annual Forestry Field Day will again be held at the conservation-award winning Bailey Brothers' Farm in Chatfield. The event is free and open to the public and is sponsored by the Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District. This year's theme: "Create Your Forest, Create Your Legacy," will be illustrated by examples of conservation-minded practices and will feature parts of the Lost Creek Hiking Trail which has its own bluebird trail, established and monitored from the trail's inception in 2011 by hiking trail member and long-time blue-



Bill Bailey explains good forestry practices to attendees at a previous Forestry Field Day held at the Bailey Brothers' Farm.

birder, Tim Gossman of Chatfield. A light supper will be provided just before the short interpreted hike which will illustrate this year's theme. Also, at the site a detailed slide show will be running and interpreted by Bill and Mary Bailey. This is the third time the event will be hosted by the Baileys, and previous attendees will note the changes brought about by good forestry practices.

Call (507) 867-9118 or email: marycbluebird@gmail.com for directions and details of the event.

SE Minnesota lost a very dedicated bluebirder with the passing of Dan Schiefert of Rochester on April 19, 2019. Dan was characterized by his vigilance in checking his nestboxes even when weakened by medical treatments. He also very generously donated nestboxes to the Olmsted County Historical Society bluebird trail. He is remembered as saying upon finding his first bluebird nest with eggs, "I'm hooked. I'm hooked." His quiet but faithful dedication to bluebirds will be missed but fondly remembered.

Submitted by Mary C. Bailey, County Coordinator
Olmsted and Fillmore Counties
Bluebird Recovery Program of MN

Have you had a change of address?

If you have moved, changed from a box number to a street address, or have your mail forwarded for several months, please let us know. If you are a snowbird let us know the dates when you leave and return. Under bulk mailing restrictions, the Postal Service does not forward newsletters, but returns them to BBRP with postage due. If the return notice has a new address, BBRP then sends your newsletter to the correct address with the additional required postage.

Please contact Membership Chair, Brianna Frisch, 507-459-4829 or email us at bri_kruse@hotmail.com if this applies to you. Your help in keeping our costs down is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

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 _____



*Brianna 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
11018 Taylor Hill Road, Minnetonka MN 55910



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	Baxter 218-829-5297	Pete Meyer Mound 952-472-7449	LE SUEUR Bruce Smisek Montgomery 507-364-8966	RAMSEY George Brown Ramsey 651-245-2435	WABASHA Carol & Dale Nibbe Lake City 651-345-2410
ANOKA Jeanne Wilkinson Anoka 763-229-9972	DAKOTA David Schmidt Inver Grove Heights 651-457-9195	HOUSTON Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573	Ben Bartusek New Prague 952-758-3398	RICE Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433	WADENA Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401
BELTRAMI Jim Humeniuk Bemidji 218-766-1390	Marlys Shirley Farmington 952-469-3510	HUBBARD Ron Jensen Park Rapids 218-732-4205	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

July 24, 2019 – Wednesday

9th Annual Forestry Field Day (SE Minnesota), Chatfield.

"Create Your Forest -- Create Your Legacy", Hosted by Bill & Mary Bailey.
For information email marycbluebird@gmail.com.

Sept. 21, 2019 – Saturday

14th Annual Southeastern Minnesota Bluebird Picnic
Chatfield

Sept. 28, 2019 – Saturday

17th Annual South Central Minnesota Bluebird Picnic
Riverbend Nature Center, Faribault

October 1, 2019

Trail Reports for the 2019 Nesting Season Due

*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."*



Photo by Doris Glander

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