



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations"

Bluebird News



Volume 29 Issue 1

Winter 2019

2019 Bluebird Expo – Cannon Falls H.S. April 6

Hello to Everyone! I hope you had a great year in 2018, it sure went fast didn't it? Now we are January 2019, and it feels more like April with the balmy temperatures. My friend Cheryl, her dog Sadie, my dog Molly and I went for a very long walk Sunday. It was so sunny and warm. I remember a few years ago we went with some friends on a cruise this time of year. It was -30 degrees with winds 30 miles an hour here in Minnesota. Oh, it was so cold! We went to the Caribbean, and it was 90 degrees there. It felt so good, but such a difference in temperatures when we got home. I am sure when we start getting snow there will be lots. They are sure getting it in the south.

This is our 41st Anniversary Year for the Bluebird Recovery Program that Vi and Dick Peterson started. What a wonderful thing for their interest in Bluebirds that we are all enjoying now. We are all banding together to save this beautiful little Gem of Blue. Our Expo will be on **Saturday, April 6th, at the Cannon Falls High School, 820 Minnesota St E, Cannon Falls, MN (Highway 19)**. It's a great venue, with lots of parking and handicapped accessible. The Atrium has lots of windows so it is nice and airy. We will have our vendors, registration table and silent auction there. The cafeteria is near there and gets the benefits of the windows as well. Doors open at 8:00 for registration and the Expo program starts at 9:00.

We are having our lunch catered by Arna Farmer of Faribault, It will be a Chicken Breast, Wild Rice, French Bread, Cole Slaw, Fruit, and Cookies. Bottled Water and Coffee will also be provided. We will have two breaks,

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with coffee and cookies. Due to the rules at the school you can still provide cookies for the coffee breaks, but they have to be store bought. Your cookie donations are always appreciated so much. When registering please indicate if you are donating cookies.

Our Speakers

Keith Radel will be speaking on "How to Increase Bluebird Fledging Rates." Keith is a Rice County Bluebirder and former Chairperson of BBRP and was my co-chair for a number of years.

Ryan Saulsbury from Brainerd/Baxter will speaking on "Lyme Disease." Ryan had the misfortune to get Lyme disease many years ago. He is constantly suffering with this dreaded disease. I think this is really an important topic for all of us. We are always out in the

woods and ditches checking bird-houses, hiking and enjoying the outdoors. I had a big Yellow Labrador Retriever named Penny that had gotten Lyme disease. She got so sick and was in such pain, just could hardly walk, her joints were so very swollen. I took her in to our vet was told she had Lyme disease. She was put on antibiotics and got better after a time.

Our friend **Al Batt** will again entertain us with his knowledge of birds, animals and his wonderful humor. I had to tell him the truth about what happened at one of our Expos that he spoke at. Our board members really don't get much of a chance to see our speakers as we are always busy out on the floor. Al is one we all go in for, we sit and enjoy his humor which is so relaxing. I was so tired, the last week before the Expo gets pretty hectic and I fell asleep:(Paul Schaub was sitting with my husband and me. I woke up when everyone was clapping. Paul said how funny that was about the squirrel. I felt so bad and told Al about it, and he said he puts lots of people asleep with his stories.

Jim Gilbert is on WCCO radio each Sunday morning with his Nature Notes. He's been observing for over 30 years the change in Minnesota seasons with accuracy. He has a wide range of topics. He has developed friendships during his weekly show with his call-in program. He also has a book out entitled "Jim Gilbert's Nature Notes" that is very popular. Jim was one of our speakers before, and I had so many people calling that had sent in their registration to make sure I'd gotten it. They all mentioned he was their favorite and were so excited he was going to be there.

2019 Bluebird Expo – Continued

The last speaker will be **David Schmidt** who is one of our new Board members. His topic is "Weekly Bluebird Monitoring Made Simple, Make Year-end Reporting Even Simpler." David is a volunteer Master Naturalist from Inver Grove Heights and he coordinates volunteers who monitor trails at several sites in Dakota County. He got his start in Bluebirding as a volunteer at the Minnesota Zoo.

It is always so nice to see everyone each year. Lots of friendship are made at the Expos. We appreciate all the support from your donations from monetary to goods for the silent auction and, of course, the cookies too. All proceeds go towards educating the public which is so important. Each year we get in such neat things for the silent auction. I do art work so I am painting wine glasses with a variety of birds that have been really popular for me. We get homemade jellies, maple syrup, handmade items and

just a wonderful variety for everyone.

For people who are needing motel accommodations, we have two in Cannon Falls. There is Grand Stay Hotel & Suites at 32027 Alexander Court, 507-757-1100, two Queen beds with breakfast@ \$119.00 + tax. This is a new motel and on the internet it looks very nice. The other is Caravan, US Hwy 52, 31913 64th Avenue, 507-263-4777. They are \$80.00 per night + tax and no breakfast. You can pull each one up on the internet and view their rooms. They would not offer a discount.

You have two ways of registering this year. You can mail the registration forms to me or go online and register at BBRP.org. I have to report to the caterer as she has to order food, so the cut-off day for people wanting lunch will be March 21st. SO please if you want lunch, please order early to make sure you get it. Otherwise you can still

register to come to the Expo through April 2nd, as I print off my spreadsheet for registration and I don't list any more after that. Of course you can walk in the morning of the Expo and register, but it makes it so much easier if you pre-register. When filling out the form online or mailing in, if you have donations of goods for the silent auction, please list what you are donating or email me so I can have all the tickets made out ahead of time that will sit on the silent auction tables. That makes it is so much easier to place everything out in a timely manner.

We will see you all in April, have a safe rest of the winter. They are talking snow and colder weather so we'll have the white stuff yet. Take care.

Jeanie Mortenson, Chair, with Glen Shirley and Mike Sandberg, my wonderful helpers.

Expo Volunteers Wanted

We would appreciate help at the Expo, especially setting up beforehand and taking down afterwards and helping with the silent auction.

Contact one of the Expo committee if you are willing to help in any way:

Jeanie Mortenson, Chair, 507-332-7003, jeanieandcarl@hotmail.com

Glen Shirley, 952-469-3510, gshirley@frontiernet.net

Mike Sandberg, 507-210-1519, pa.sandberg3409@gmail.com



Farewell Sanford Downs

Sanford Downs passed away on January 23, 2019 in AZ. He was a avid Bluebirder and will have his ashes spread over a Bluebird trail.

He attended many of the Bluebird Expos in MN and our Rice Co Annual picnics traveling from Nebraska with wife Gini to do so.



Photo by Doris Glander

New Members 2019

• Robert Adamek, Elko, MN
 • David Simmons, Menahga, MN
 • Karah Bausch, Minneapolis, MN
 • Charles & Denise Smalley, Chatfield, MN

Lisa Machacek, Apple Valley, MN
 Linda & Charles Willihnganz, Rochester, MN
 City of South St. Paul, South St. Paul, MN

"The House Wren Debate Revisited – Part 2" by Barbara Boyle

Althea Sherman pulled down her wren houses. The wrens then destroyed the families of Downy and Hairy woodpeckers, flickers, bluebirds, and others, securing the cavities for themselves and teaching Miss Sherman first hand of their propensity for retaliation. She fought for the rest of her life to reduce the numbers of House wrens breeding on her property. And she made it her mission to educate and inform others about the character of the House wren and the folly of erecting wren houses. She maintained that the countless boxes, assembled in nearly every school in the nation, given away at fairs and church socials, nailed up or hanging in almost every garden, farm and city, were providing an irreversible advantage to a species which, out of balance, lives at the expense of all other species in the area. A pair of House wrens in an acre may result in little or no distress to their own or other species. Five to ten pairs in that same area, however, can result in a profound alteration in the scheme of things, only to benefit an already hardy species that needs no such help.

"When Miss Althea Sherman's paper on the House Wren was read before the Iowa Ornithological Union, at Ames, in 1924, it aroused such an incredulous protest that only her undisputed reputation as an accurate and seasoned bird student enabled her observations to receive the consideration that was their due." This quote, from *Bird-Lore* May/June 1925, gives just a hint of the controversy which erupted when the same paper was published in that journal. In an at-

tempt to educate, Miss Sherman, probably inadvertently, launched the "Great Wren Debate", which played out on the pages of scientific, ornithological and the popular press for years to come. "The Problem of the House Wren" elicited heated responses and testimony from ordinary citizens through leading ornithologists. Articles had been published twenty years earlier regarding the destructive temperament of the House wren and these were recalled. Readers were admonished to consider these findings and to heed the warnings that learned men of science had offered two decades earlier. Indeed, Miss Sherman held herself accountable for not attending to these warnings when putting up the wren boxes on her own property. Scores of observations and experiences with wrens were submitted and began to spill across the pages of *Bird-Lore*.

Some of the response was supportive of the House wren and disclaimed any destructive behavior. Some more clearly substantiated Miss Sherman's position and went even further, with research results including bill hole measurements and banding, which proved that female wrens also destroyed other species' eggs. Another article by Miss Sherman, entitled "Down With the House Wren Boxes" appeared in *The Wilson Bulletin* several months later and further fanned the flames, spreading the debate to other publications.

In preparation for her case, Miss Sherman had searched through 552 scientific and ornithological publications. In the last

pages of her wren journal she included a bibliography containing 114 articles and not including her own vast research or the letters she received in response to her articles. Judging from letters which were published and from notations in her journals, the majority of written responses substantiated her findings and lauded her courage for exposing the truth and challenging the "sweet" reputation of "little Jenny Wren".

The greater controversy, however, was an emotional one. Those who were entirely ignorant of the destructive tendencies of House wrens, or worse, those who admired the wren and would not allow their beliefs to be challenged, attacked Miss Sherman. Her ornithological skills and observation techniques were challenged and criticized. She was ridiculed by some, lambasted on an emotional level and, profoundly worse, she was discounted by others. Where she was invited to speak before scientific societies, her research on other species was still valued, but her research on the House wren (which was equally comprehensive and thorough) was ignored or avoided.

Miss Sherman was a woman in a field solidly dominated by men. She was self-taught and she was dedicated, diligent, and proud. By this time in her life Althea Sherman had long ago achieved national and international acclaim and recognition as a respected scientist and, possibly more important, there was self-recognition for her decades of research and accomplishments. The emotional reaction by the public, and even by some of her peers, to

"The House Wren Debate Revisited - Part 2" Continued

an issue which she felt profoundly threatened the welfare of so many other species of songbirds stirred feelings of great sorrow and bitterness within her. In journal entries and letters to Margaret Morse-Nice, it is clear that she took these attacks personally, and resented them, but more importantly, she felt the ignorance and refusal to listen further doomed her efforts to protect other birds.

"Speaking for myself it must be confessed that I may have sinned against my small bird

neighbors when, for purposes of study, there has been tolerance of two nestings each of Screech Owls and Sparrow Hawks [Kestrels]. But there is only one sin that causes constant mourning in sackcloth and ashes, that causes me to lie awake nights envisioning the future condition of our country with its bird population consisting mainly of those undesirable aliens, the Starling, the English (House) Sparrow, together with the Grackles and the House Wrens: that sin was the

putting up of bird houses and allowing, them to be occupied by House Wrens."

-Althea R. Sherman, Wilson Bulletin, September 1925. "Additional Evidence Against the House Wren"

Reprinted from Wings, the newsletter of the Johnson County, Iowa, Songbird Project, Summer 1993

From the New York State Bluebird Society newsletter:

Q: What is the average life expectancy of a bluebird, starting immediately after they fledge?

A: The mortality of a first-year eastern bluebird is less than 50% - meaning only about 50% live to return the next season. Beyond that, the average longevity is 3-5 years. The oldest bluebird recorded was 10 years old.

2019 Bluebird Expo Registration

I am (we are) coming. Please print name tags as: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Email/Phone: _____

I would like a table for display (Non-profit organizations only)

I can bring a dozen store-bought cookies _____

Do you have an item to donate for the silent auction?

Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, please provide description so a ticket is made out for it.

Lunch -- Chicken Breast, Wild Rice, Cole Slaw, French Bread, Fruit & Cookie and Water

Number of registrations @ \$12.00 before 3/21 \$ _____

After 3/21 @ \$13.00 each \$ _____

Number of lunch reservations @ \$ 12.00 \$ _____

PRE-REGISTRATION FOR LUNCH DEAD LINE IS MARCH 21st.

Cash donations are welcome to purchase items for the silent auction

\$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Questions: Call: Jeanie Mortenson 507-332-7003 • jeanieandcarl@hotmail.com

Please detach and send to:

Bluebird Recovery Program, c/Jeanie Mortenson, 1703 Greenwood Place, Faribault, MN 55021.

AFTERWORD (TO) *The House Wren Debate*

Reprinted from Bluebirds
Across Nebraska

The time frame of the above article was 1925 or before. The dire warnings of Althea Sherman and others are more significant now, some 70 years later. The House wren is everywhere, in open habitat where it was not previously found, and is still breeding in staggering numbers (5-12 eggs per brood, usually two and occasionally three broods per season). Wren boxes are everywhere, still the favored grade school project nationwide, and available at reasonable prices in stores everywhere. The House wrens fill most of the houses provided for them, and many, many more, displacing bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees, titmice, woodpeckers, and more. The years between Miss Sherman's observations and now

have provided more opportunities to prove her theories and it is so. There is hardly a bluebirder anywhere who would not rail against the wren and tell stories of mayhem and sorrow. Any serious 'birder' or 'lister'—one who seeks to locate and identify species—will confirm their countless numbers in all regions.

And the reluctance to believe the destructive behavior of House wrens is as prevalent today as in Miss Sherman's time. Jenny Wren? No! There have been decades to study or even chance upon the materials available in regard to this species. Yet there is widespread ignorance. Is there unwillingness to look at the truth? To explore and share observations right here in our own backyards?

It is time to once again open up the "Great Wren Debate". It is this

writer's opinion that House wrens not be allowed to nest in boxes, not be so overwhelmingly helped by humans, that the popularization of wren boxes in schools and elsewhere be stopped and that robin platforms be built instead. Maybe even more assertive steps should be taken.

The subject is a delicate one because there is such enjoyment of this little bird. But is there not enjoyment of the others too? And it is a sensitive area because the House wren is a protected species (should it be?) and it is illegal to tamper. But are not all these houses a form of tampering?

We invite and encourage you to share your observations, experiences, evidence (pro & con), and feelings on this matter.

"13th Annual Southeast MN. Bluebirders' Picnic in Chatfield"

Over 20 people and one certified service dog (also a bluebirder) attended the thirteenth annual picnic to end the bluebirding season in Chatfield. We had a full table of delicious food for our potluck picnic, with the main course and tableware provided by Bill and Mary Bailey. We shared trail stories with our meal and had awards for 100 bluebirds fledged and drew numbers for door prizes. (See accompanying pictures.) A significant number of new people attended, and we were gratified by attendees from years past.

We are fortunate to be able to have our gathering indoors at the Chatfield United Methodist Church, one of our dedicated bluebirders being the pastor there. We never have to worry about inclement weather or wind blowing things away. We are very grateful to Reverend Deb for this hospitality.



100 Patchers present:
Quint Lohse, Mike Jersek, Mary Bailey, Bill Bailey



Bluebirders attending the Chatfield MN picnic

**Minnesota Christmas Birdcount Preliminary Results For Eastern Bluebirds
(Audubon's 119th Christmas Bird Count)**

Cedar Creek Bog	8	Jackson County	1	Rochester	10
Excelsior	1	Northwest McLeod	8	St. Paul (northeast suburban)	2
Fergus Falls	2	New Ulm	4	Whitewater S.P. and Game Refuge	3
Hastings-Etter	8	Northern Wright County	3	Willmar	19
Henderson	2	Owatonna	18	Wild River	1

BBRP 2018 County Bluebird Nesting Totals

County	Reports	Fledged	Houston			Rice		
Anoka	8	276	Isanti	2	358	Scott	92	3472
Becker	1	14	Itasca	1	28	Sherburne	7	254
Beltrami	1	242	Kanabec	3	11	Sibley	6	103
Benton	1	74	Kandiyohi	3	311	St Louis	1	9
Blue Earth	1	74	Kandiyohi	3	23	St Louis	2	35
Brown	1	22	LeSueur	2	94	Stearns	5	160
Brown	1	5	Lyon	1	19	Steele	3	224
Carlton	1	11	Mille Lacs	1	11	Wabasha	1	47
Carver	2	118	Morrison	1	61	Wadena	1	9
Chisago	5	152	Mower	3	276	Washington	9	291
Crow Wing	1	4	Nicollet	2	26	Winona	2	9
Dakota	30	1365	Olmsted	18	635	Wright	4	311
Dodge	2	80	Ottertail	1	8			
Douglas	1	5	Pennington	1	7	Minnesota		
Fillmore	55	828	Pine	4	51	46 Counties	334	11924
Goodhue	22	322	Pope	1	58			
Hennepin	21	1271	Ramsey	8	183			

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 Bbrpmembership@gmail.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 backs 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
395 Williams Street • Lewiston, MN 55952



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	CROW WING Mary Kalinowski Baxter 218-829-5297	Bob Hursh Edina 952-334-5084 Pete Meyer Mound 952-472-7449	LAKE Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047	PENNINGTON Dave & Diane Peterson Thief River Falls 218-681-7614	STEARNS Vacant
ANOKA Jeanne Wilkinson Anoka 763-229-9972	DAKOTA David Schmidt Inver Grove Heights 651-457-9195	HOUSTON Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573	LE SUEUR Bruce Smisek Montgomery 507-364-8966	POPE Bruce & Barb Mulvaney Glenwood 320-278-3763	SWIFT Bill Hoberg Benson 320-843-3988
BELTRAMI Jim Humeniuk Bemidji 218-766-1390	Marlys Shirley Farmington 952-469-3510	HUBBARD Ron Jensen Park Rapids 218-732-4205	Ben Bartusek New Prague 952-758-3398	RICE Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433	WABASHA Carol & Dale Nibbe Lake City 651-345-2410
BENTON Bob & Sandy Rajkowski Rice 320-393-2909	FILLMORE Mary Bailey Chatfield 507-867-9918	ISANTI Vacant	LYON (S. Lyon) Paul Rasmussen Russell 507-823-4731	Fern & Ken Vesledahl Nerstrand 507-645-8610	WADENA Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401
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CARLTON Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953	Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573	KANABEC Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953	MILLE LACS Vacant	SHERBURNE Jan Wallin Zimmerman 763-442-4390	WASHINGTON Vacant
CASS Vacant	GOODHUE Steve Malecha Cannon Falls 507-581-4383	KANDIYOHI Ronald A. Erpelding Willmar 320-235-0788	MORRISON Vacant	ST. LOUIS (N. ST. LOUIS) Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047	WINONA Brianna Frisch Lewiston 507-459-4829
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Photo by Doris Glander

Upcoming Events

April 6, 2019 – Saturday

Annual Bluebird EXPO

Cannon Falls High School, 820 Minnesota St E. Cannon Falls
Doors open at 8:00 for registration and the Expo program starts at 9:00.

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 marybluebird@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.