



*"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations"*

# Bluebird News



Volume 30 Issue 1

Winter 2020

## 2020 Bluebird Expo *by* Jeanie Mortenson

Hello, Happy 2020 to you all! As I sit here typing, the sun has finally come out and it looks like our snowstorm is over, but we have such high winds and they are advising no travel. I really hope we don't have a long winter. It would be so nice to have a spring like we used to have, not snowstorms in April like we've been having lately. I miss our beautiful early springs. We seem to go from winter into summer, and they are talking about a warmer than normal summer again.

Our Expo on **April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020** will be held at **Cannon Falls High School, 820 East Minnesota Street (Highway 19)**. For new people attending this year, we had our Expo there in 2019. It is a great venue, with lots of parking and handicapped accessible. The Atrium has huge windows, and it's nice and sunny, everything is in close proximity. Just perfect for us. We will have our vendors, registration and membership table and silent auction there. The cafeteria is near there also.

Doors open at 8:00 a.m. for registration and the Expo program begins at 9:00.

### Our Speakers

**Keith Radel** will be speaking on "Bluebird Basics." Keith

### POINTS OF INTEREST

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started his first Bluebird nest boxes in 1986. He had 25 on 5 acres, fledged zero. Over 30 years he has a grand total of 13,148 so he has come a long way. He has also started many people in Bluebirding. He has a wealth of knowledge and is always willing to help anyone get started the right way.

**Liz Hartmann** will be educating us on Pollinators. Liz has always enjoyed the presence of bees and butterflies in her yard. Several years ago, after hearing that pollinators were disappearing in alarming numbers throughout the

world, she started to look at these amazing creatures with new eyes. Liz is a founding member of GROWS Garden Club (Gardeners Reaching out with Service). For 25 years the club has worked with the city to help beautify Faribault by planting and maintaining gardens at Central Park and buying trees with monies from an annual plant sale and planting them throughout the city. Three years ago she and other members formed a GROWS Pollinator Committee. They worked with the City to adopt a Faribault Pollinator Friendly Resolution in 2017 and continue to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators.

**Michelle Labelle** is the founder and operator of Wildlife Intensive & Critical Care Unit. This is a small 501(c)3 non-profit organization devoted to helping injured wildlife in need. She provides nursing care to wildlife with injuries and assists with wildlife rescues and manages to raise a few orphans a year. She has been a veterinary technician/nurse for 20 years and holds wildlife rehabilitation with permits with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Continued on Page 2

## 2020 Bluebird Expo *continued*

**Al Batt** is one of our speakers who is a dear friend. He entertains us with humor and his knowledge. He leads many birding groups all over the world. He writes four weekly humor and nature columns for many newspapers, and Bird Watcher's Digest and a number of radio stations. He also wrote an entertaining book "A Life Gone to the Birds".

**Katy Anderegg** will be speaking on raising Monarch Butterflies. Katie works as a Naturalist at River Bend Nature Center in Faribault. She coordinates school field trips and teaches a variety of nature programs to all ages. A few years ago she planted a milkweed plant without much knowledge about it. It took a full year before it began to produce a decent plant. Shortly after, Monarchs started laying eggs and her interest in their life cycle peaked. She researched how to properly raise monarch butterflies and successfully raised and released 40 of them. She wants to teach people the joy and experience how rewarding it is to raise monarchs.

**David Schmidt** will speak on "Bluebirding Beyond Basics—Dealing with Gnats, Wasps & more in 2020." It will cover successful gnat deterrents; testing nest box modifications, to eliminate wasp nesting; helping bluebirds survive a cool damp spring; and location of nest boxes. David is a volunteer Master Naturalist at 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.

We are having Arna Farmer cater our lunch. It will be Chicken Breast in a sauce, Wild Rice, French Bread, Cole Slaw, Fruit and Cookies. Bottled Water and Coffee will also be provided. We have two breaks with coffee and cookies. If you would like to bring some store-bought cookies it would be very much appreciated. Please indicate on the registration form if you will be providing them.

This year we are going to allow a few vendors to sell nature and bird related items. You will have to provide pictures and you will be juryed. The cost of the table or spot is \$25.00. So send me the pictures by email to [\[carl@hotmail.com\]\(mailto:carl@hotmail.com\). We will also be having several non-profit information tables.](mailto:jeanieand-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

We will again be having our Silent Auction and if you would like to donate some items that would be great. On the registration form please list what you will be donating. That way I can have the bidding tickets all made out when you come in with them. This year we will be having 3 different silent auction closing times. It will go by colored bidding sheets. We appreciate all the support from your donations from monetary to goods for the silent auction. You people really bring some neat items, from home-made jellies, hand-crafted art items and items that have been bought. It is always such a great variety.

Again there are two ways to register. You can mail the registration form to me or go online and register at [BBRP.org](http://BBRP.org). Due to the caterer having to order her food, the cutoff will be April 10th to register to get lunch. Otherwise you can still register to come to the Expo through April 15th, as I will be printing off my spreadsheet for registration then and I don't list anymore after that. Of course you can still walk in and register the day of the Expo but it is so much easier if you pre-register.

If you need motel accommodations we have two in Cannon Falls. They are Grand Stay Hotel & Suites at 32027 Alexander Court, 507-757-1100. They have two queen beds for \$119.00 + tax and they offer a continental breakfast. The other one is Caravan Motel at US Hwy 52, 31913 64th Avenue, 507-263-4777. They have 2 queen beds for \$80.00 + tax and no breakfast. You can pull up each motel on the internet and view their rooms.

We will be looking forward to seeing you on April 18th. Have a wonderful winter and hope for an early spring. We want to thank all of you for the support you give BBRP.

Last year Mike's grandson Aiden drew the picture that was on the program. If there are any children who would like to send in a drawing, that would be great. We will jury them also and use one.

Jeanie Mortenson, chair, and my committee Glen Shirley and Mike Sandberg.

### 2020 Bluebird Expo Registration

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Tables are available for venders wishing to sell nature, bird or animal related merchandise, books or artwork. Please describe your merchandise \_\_\_\_\_ complete this application and submit photos of what you wish to sell. We'll review your application, if selected there will be a \$25 fee. We will contact you. **PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT THE FEE WITH THIS APPLICATION.**

Tables for non-profit organizations are also available. Please provide your organizations name \_\_\_\_\_ complete this application and we'll contact you. No fee is required.

If you can bring a dozen or two store-bought cookies please indicate here \_\_\_ 1 dozen, \_\_\_ 2 dozen.

Do you have an item to donate for the silent auction? If so please provide a description of the item for the auction ticket \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch— Chicken & Wild Rice, Coleslaw, Fruit, French Bread, Cookies, Water and Coffee

Number of registrations \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$12.00 before 4/10 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$13.00 after 4/10 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Number of lunch reservations \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$12.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*PRE-REGISTRATION FOR LUNCH DEADLINE IS APRIL 10th.*

Cash donations are welcome to purchase items for the silent auction

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Donations are tax deductible*

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: Call: Jeanie Mortenson 507-332-7003 [jeanieandcarl@hotmail.com](mailto:jeanieandcarl@hotmail.com)

Registration form and check, if applicable, should be made out to Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota and sent to:

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

## 2019 County Totals

County	Reports	Fledged
Anoka	7	212
Becker	1	8
Beltrami	1	269
Benton	2	92
Blue Earth	1	0
Carlton	1	16
Carver	2	187
Chippewa	1	0
Chisago	2	108
Dakota	31	1221
Dodge	1	41
Douglas	4	31
Fillmore	54	649
Goodhue	9	293
Hennepin	22	630
Houston	7	280
Hubbard	1	138
Isanti	1	5
Itasca	1	5
Kanabec	2	188
Kandiyohi	1	15
LeSueur	2	40
Lyon	1	5
Morrison	1	84
Mower	2	212
Nicollet	2	14
Olmsted	20	370
Ottertail	1	9
Pennington	1	6
Pine	1	7
Pope	1	26
Ramsey	5	107
Rice	85	3023
Scott	5	33
Sherburne	5	99
St Louis	1	8
Stearns	3	121
Steele	6	205
Wabasha	2	27
Wadena	1	7
Waseca	1	6
Washington	9	316
Winona	3	272
Wright	4	218
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>9603</b>
44 Counties		



*Photos by Doris Glander*



**Tidbits**

**NEW MEMBERS**

John Ferm	Excelsior, MN
Candace McClenahan	Bloomington, MN
Kathleen Grittner	Viroqua, WI
Tim Madigan	Faribault, MN
Donna Lindberg	E. St. Paul, MN
Carol Cummins	Golden Valley, MN
Susie Jedlund	Burnsville, MN
Richard Linck	Rehoboth, MA
Cheryl Jankiewicz	Wykoff, MN
John O'Reilly	Hinckley, MN
Richard Sherva	Anoka, MN
Kay Aurand	Woodbury, MN
Brian McDonald	Cannon Falls, MN
Bernard Scanlan	Minneapolis, MN
Lynn Lally	Savage MN OR The Villages, FL
Jennifer Jahner	St. Paul Park, MN
Jeanne Olsen	Hinkley, MN

**A WORD FROM EXPO'S COOKIE LADY!**

A very special part of our Expo hospitality through all the years is the way we all bring cookies to treat each other at our coffee breaks!!

Many thanks to all of you who come and greet me with your favorite cookies to share! Please remember that homemade cookies, though so delicious, may NOT be served at Expo because of public health restrictions. Cookies purchased at bakeries and stores are welcome. I look forward to greeting you again at the 2020 Expo's cookie booth!

Marlys Shirley, the Cookie Lady

**Expo Volunteers Wanted**

We would appreciate help at the Expo, especially setting up the day before 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  
 Glen Shirley                      952-469-3510  
 Mike Sandberg                    507-210-1519

*We save postage if we can email your newsletter instead of mailing it. For snowbirds, with bulk mailing we get newsletters back with postage due because they will not forward them. Sign up for emailed newsletters on our website*

**"Check out our Facebook Page"**

**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 \_\_\_\_\_



*Bring a 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, Minnetonka MN 55910

## Elementary Students Introduced to Bluebirding, by Stephanie MacPhail

When we started designing our Outdoor Classroom at Washburn Elementary School in Bloomington back in 2014, we knew it needed birdhouses. I was a budding birder at the time, excited to get my students involved with bluebirds. How hard could it be? You just put up some nest boxes and sit back and wait, right?

Oh, the things I didn't know. But if there was one thing I knew I wanted, I wanted my students to see bluebird eggs. I wanted them to be part of a conservation movement. Two years later, our Outdoor Classroom - an approximately 1,000 square foot old courtyard - began to take shape. Native plants were planted, garden beds were installed, seating went in - and, in the late summer of 2017, three bluebird nest boxes joined our space.

You can imagine my excitement when spring of 2018 came rolling around. We were finally going to get bluebirds! And, we definitely got bluebirds. Yes, we definitely got bluebirds ON the boxes. They weren't going in the boxes. My 5th graders and I were befuddled. Why not? Upon doing some research, we discovered that the house sparrows were to blame. We took down a feeder to discourage them, but they laughed in our faces at that: each of our subsequent visits to the bluebird boxes resulted in us finding sparrow nesting material. It got so bad that we finally decided to board up the boxes and just let them be for the rest of the spring. Our first year of bluebirds was a bust. We clearly needed help.

That summer and fall, I researched as much as possible. I was stunned to find that hosting bluebirds wasn't as easy as I was expecting. In fact, I was horrified to learn that it would be better to not have boxes if we weren't going to do anything about the house sparrows. I was feeling defeated, until a helpful connection put me in touch with Jack Hauser, who gratefully agreed to lend us a hand. He gave us tips, altered our boxes, and helped us relocate them.

It was now the spring of 2019 and I felt trepidation, worried about how the season would shake out. I so wanted my students to be able to see bluebird eggs. I wanted them to feel that they were a part of something big, a promise to bluebirds and the environment. As our boxes went up in their new spots that March, the battle began. Our school's custodial staff was not pleased with the placement, saying that the boxes would be in the way of the lawnmower and that kids would tamper with the boxes. Then, as if on cue, the house sparrows returned with a vengeance and it became a regular game of Whack-a-Mole to keep them out. When I wanted to move forward with trapping, I received push back from some staff saying that it wasn't right. It was overwhelming. It would have been easiest to just say ok, I'm done.



But I didn't. Through all of this were twenty-two 5th graders who were also waiting to see a bluebird nest and egg. So we carried on with monitoring and acknowledging our feelings when we found not what we were hoping for. We talked about how the data we were gathering, even though it wasn't positive, was still good data. We talked about patience and how it was ok to feel frustrated, but we had to keep trying. And then one day, I opened box #2, and gasped. The kids quickly crowded around me. I stepped aside and didn't say anything. I just pointed to the soft, neat nest of pine needles. It was a celebration.

Once we found that bluebird nest, our sense of purpose and drive was renewed. We refreshed ourselves on ethical nest monitoring, read articles on bluebirds so we could understand them more, and trained ourselves to listen for their earthy calls. We kept field notes on our visits and shared our data with Cornell's Nestwatch. And we were still angry at the house sparrows, who wouldn't leave the bluebird boxes alone, so we read up on why they were detrimental and what we could do to help. The kids became so attached to bluebird nest box monitoring that, the day we found a bluebird egg lying just under one of the boxes, you would have thought the world had ended.

When summer arrived, I kept monitoring. Jack was back, assisting with house sparrows, and about late June, things were looking better. I visited the boxes each week, took photos to document progress, and shared them with the students. When our wishes finally resulted in fledglings, I smiled the biggest smile as I wrote my students an email. What have bluebirds done for us? Bluebirds taught us patience. They taught us to stand our ground. They taught us that it's OK to ask for help. They taught us about conservation issues. I couldn't have given my students these lessons from a textbook. This school year, I have twenty 5th graders who are awaiting the return of our blue-feathered friends. They'll learn their call, how to identify their nest, and how to shake their fist at house sparrows. They'll also learn how to be a best friend to bluebirds, with some patience and willingness to learn.





## 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](mailto:mnbluebirder@hotmail.com) for more information.

<p><b>AITKIN</b> Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953</p>	<p><b>DAKOTA</b> David Schmidt Inver Grove Heights 651-457-9195 <a href="mailto:schmidt_dw@yahoo.com">schmidt_dw@yahoo.com</a></p>	<p>Pete Meyer Mound 952-472-7449</p>	<p>Ben Bartusek New Prague 952-758-3398 <a href="mailto:bartusek@bevcomm.net">bartusek@bevcomm.net</a></p>	<p><b>RICE</b> Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433 <a href="mailto:mnbluebirder@hotmail.com">mnbluebirder@hotmail.com</a></p>	<p><b>WADENA</b> Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401 <a href="mailto:g.r-b.jr@comcast.net">g.r-b.jr@comcast.net</a></p>
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## Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota



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*"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations"*

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Editor BB News: Virginia Windschitl,

edbbnews@outlook.com

Photo by Doris Glander

### Upcoming Events

**March 11-15**

**North American Bluebird Society 2020 Conference,**  
Kearney Nebraska

**Saturday, March 14, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.,**  
**Horticulture Day, Buntrock Commons,**  
St Olaf College (will have a booth)

**Saturday, April 18, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.**  
**+ field trip )weather permitting)**  
**BBRP 2020 Bluebird Expo**  
Cannon Falls High School

**Wednesday, April 22, Earth Day**  
**Saturday, April 25,**  
Northfield Earth Day events  
(Check for events near you for Earth Day)

*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.