



Bluebird News



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"

Volume 31 Issue 3

Summer, 2021

Love Those Landowners By Mary C. Bailey

Actually, it all started with a command: "Mary, southeast Minnesota has the best bluebird habitat in the state, and you have some of it right here on this road. You have got to get bluebird boxes out here soon!" Just imagine the tone of voice on this statement! It was about sixteen years ago and I was riding in a vehicle with the Bluebird Recovery Program State Coordinator and Loren "Murph" Murphy along the section of Olmsted County Road 136 between US Route 52 and my street, 150th Avenue, SE, just north of the city of Chatfield. When Murph spies good eastern bluebird habitat, you put bluebird nestboxes there. Just get it done!

One fact complicated this task, I did not own the land. These gentlemen were with me to advise me on placing additional boxes on my land, and we hadn't even arrived there yet. We did take care of that, but Murph was insistent that I approach the landowners of that prime bluebird real estate. I did, and the subsequent years proved him absolutely correct.

I first called Rob and Peggy Baker, who were kindly ac-

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cepting of my proposal. As with them and the two that followed, I offered to check and maintain the boxes, disturbing little if any of the area around them as I visited for my weekly trail monitoring. They were curious about the nature of the species, and I told them about the fact that 61% of the bluebird's diet is insects. Also, the other species that might occupy the boxes – the tree swallow – eats a diet primarily of mosquitoes. The Bakers were on board as bluebird landlords. In the following years, the Bakers were often the ones to spot the bluebirds' arrival in early March. They call or text me to let me know to replace the nextbox cylinders that I remove after the fall migration to protect them from the snow from the plow. I leave the

boxes up during migration to provide roosting spots. Several bluebirds will gather in one box to stay warm on chilly migration nights.

I talked to Jack Griffin next. He knew about my fondness for bluebirds, and his response was, "Anything that makes you happy!" I told him the same positive facts as I



Land owner Jack Griffin has successful bluebird boxes on Olmsted County Road 136. This season two of his boxes are getting second nestings.



Peggy and Robert Baker have successful bluebird boxes near their home on Olmsted County Road 136. This season, they have bluebirds and tree swallows nesting in adjacent boxes.

Continued on page 2

Love Those Landowners (continued)

had told the Bakers, and he repeated, “Anything that makes you happy!” Some of the boxes were going on the land where his business shop was, and then he said, “Now, wait a minute. Those bluebirds aren’t going to poop on my equipment are they?”

I assured him with another fact. I said, “Oh, no, Jack! Bluebirds have been scientifically observed taking little rolls of paper towels and little spray bottles of Windex and actually cleaning windshields.” (Sometimes I fib a little.) To that bit of fiction, I received a quick, “Well, okay then.” Jack was on board as a bluebird landlord.

The last couple I approached I knew the least, but my one encounter had been positive, Fran and Donna Novotny. Fran had provided a folded flag for my late husband’s casket after he died suddenly a few years after we moved here from Indiana. They were pleasantly receptive to my proposal of improving the environment and making homes for this sweet little species and were interested in the bluebird’s beneficial nature as well as its beautiful coloring and sweet song. The Novotnys were favorable toward becoming bluebird landlords.

I told all of these landowners and probably most of those I discuss bluebirds with about an article I read while I still lived in Indiana. It said that if the

bluebirds were your neighbor, they would have the neatest houses, their children would be the best behaved, and they would have the sweetest voices in the church choir. In all the ensuing years, I have not changed my mind on that picture of this delightful little species.

That strip of road – about a mile and a half – has been home to bluebirds (and tree swallows) ever since I put those boxes up all those years ago; and this time of year if you walk or drive down it, you might see them on the utility wires, the fence lines or on the nestboxes they occupy. Tree swallows are nesting there and, along with the bluebirds, will be flying back and forth to the boxes to feed their young.

Also, along this prime piece of avian real estate, you may also see barn swallows, the eastern kingbird, the red-tailed hawk, the red-winged blackbird, the American kestrel, the mourning dove, the occasional killdeer, and the eastern meadowlark. I hear this one more often than see it. These would probably have been there no matter what; but the bluebirds and tree swallows are, without a doubt, in this area because of the kindness and generosity of these landowners. Murph was right, but he had no idea what nice neighbors I have.

11th Annual Forestry Field Day Involves Bluebirders

On Wednesday, July 28, Bill and Mary Bailey of BBRP participated in the 11th Annual Forestry Field Day “History & Heritage of Hardwoods in Southeast Minnesota” at the Maynard Underbakke Forest Management Unit in Fillmore County, near Preston.

Participants enjoyed fellowship and a light supper followed by a hike through this area. They learned about the history of hardwood management in Southeast Minnesota and met and heard personal stories from Bonita and Del Underbakke, Maynard Underbakke’s daughter and son. Industry professionals and peers offered ideas and examples to improve forest land. People like Bill Bailey of BBRP and other professionals identified and analyzed management techniques which attendees could replicate on their own property. Bluebirders from Olmsted and Fillmore Counties participated in this event, and Mary Bailey provided a model bluebird box and a table of information posters and pamphlets for those interested in bluebirds. It was a pleasant evening to experience a state forest unit and what it can offer to the general public as well as forest landowners.



Bill Bailey speaks and demonstrates good forestry practices at the recent annual Forestry Field Day in Fillmore County.

Trail Supplies By Virginia Windschitl and Mary Roen

I ran across a helpful article called “Monitoring Bluebird Nest Boxes” published in our newsletter in 2008 written by Mary Roen. Now that the current nesting season is over you might want to reorganize your supplies, or if you are new to bluebirding and planning to start monitoring a trail next year this gives you some good suggestions. The gloves, some type of scraper and a plastic bag are definitely a “Must” along with a notebook.

She wrote “2008 is my 21st year of monitoring a Bluebird Trail... It seemed I was always missing some important tool or supply when I did my weekly trail monitoring. At first was walking my trail, so it meant a trip back to the house to get what I needed. I got a little smarter and carried a nylon bag with some supplies, but it seemed I was always digging to the bottom, or emptying out all the contents to get what I needed. I finally hit on a system that has worked for me for several years now. I use a small plastic toolbox that you can get at almost any hardware or discount store. I now monitor the nest boxes on our property with a 4-wheeler, and boxes on family and neighbor’s properties by car. With my toolbox of supplies, I have not had to make trips back home for things I am missing. I want my monitoring time to be enjoyable, as it is one of my favorite hobbies. Over the years I have learned to monitor ‘smarter not harder’ and that makes for a much more enjoyable experience.”

Here is the list of supplies she kept in her toolbox:

1. Wren guard to minimize predation from house wrens once bluebirds lay at least 1 egg
2. Van Ert in box trap for house sparrows (It is very important to learn to use this correctly)
3. Hole reducer (1 1/8") when chickadees use the nest box.
(Keeps larger birds from taking over the nest box.)
4. Ruler for miscellaneous measurements
5. Vinyl glove for sanitary removal of old nests
6. Monitoring notebook and pen to record what I see each week
7. Cordless screwdriver with extra bit (It is amazing how many I have lost!)
8. 3-inch plastic putty knife for cleaning out the nest box
9. Channel-lock pliers for pulling up the rebar if I choose to move the box
10. Mechanic's mirror to see in the nest when I monitor.
11. Pliers that can be used in numerous ways
12. Felt marker to number my nest boxes
13. Earplugs for protection when I pound in rebar when moving nest boxes. I use the plastic bag holding them to put old nests in, after the nestlings fledged. Old nests at the box can attract predators.
14. Band-Aids for mishaps (I never said I was perfect!)
15. Sunglasses
16. Wood screws for attaching the wren guards or hole restrictors
17. Extra hose clamps for attaching the baffles to the pole
18. Extra box mounts
19. Miscellaneous screws
20. Duct tape (What can't you fix with duct tape?)

Since I don't carry quite as many items as she has on her list, I have used a plastic tote made for cleaning supplies. Do you have any favorite tools that are not on this list? Send any suggestions to edbbnews@outlook.com and we can include them in an upcoming newsletter.

Public Lands Nest Box Program

Several years ago the Bluebird Recovery Program of MN, to further its mission of “Education and Outreach,” began 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). With various different individuals maintaining the BBRP website over the past several years the web page featuring the nest box offering was deleted. At a fall 2019 BBRP board meeting the program’s documentation was found and a decision was made to restart the offering. The board authorized funding to award up to 100 nest boxes per year to qualifying applicants. Applications would be accepted until the end of February each year, with awards being made and boxes distributed each March.

For the 2020 - 2021 application period, which ended February 1, 2021, eight applications were received, seven of which met the program qualifications and all 100 nest boxes were granted. Four golf courses, three city parks, a nature center and a State Park trail were the recipients. They’re in counties from Houston in southeastern Minnesota, up to Chisago just north of the metro, with Ramsey, Hennepin, Rice, Dakota and Washington rounding out the distribution. These 7 organizations have been maintaining bluebird trails for an average of 14 years; they have an average of 25 nest boxes currently installed and 1 to 4 volunteers doing weekly trail monitoring. They’ve all stated their aging trails are in need of nest box replacement. The BBRP grants will be put to very good use.

We have already begun to receive applications for the 2021 - 2022 granting period which closes on February 1, 2022. The program requirements and an application form can be found on the BBRP website, www.bbrp.org, under the heading ‘Public Lands Nest Box Program’. Questions about the program can be sent to info@bbrp.org.

15th Annual SE MN Bluebirders’ Picnic

The 15th Annual SE MN Bluebirders’ Picnic will be held at the home of Bill and Mary Bailey at 9400 150th Avenue, SE in Chatfield, MN at noon on Saturday, September 18, 2021. There will be a potluck dinner with the main course, beverages and tableware provided by Bill and Mary. This is a time to share your bluebird trail stories, pick up tips for success, and compare your year with others. There will be a drawing for door prizes. The event is free and open to the public. Please RSVP by text or voicemail to (507) 867-9118.

Directions to the home of Bill & Mary Bailey

From US Highway 52, just south of mile marker 36, turn on County Road 136; you can only turn to the east. Follow that road about 1 ½ miles to the first intersection (150th Avenue, SE) and turn right. Drive about ½ mile (second driveway) to 9400; the numbers are on both gateposts and the mailbox. Also, there is a bluebird on the mailbox post. For those using a GPS, enter 9400 150th Avenue, SE, Chatfield, MN. Please feel free to call (507) 867-9118 for further directions. Welcome!

Photos by Doris Glander



Tidbits

Reporting Is Important

Please report your results online at <https://bbrp.org/report-forms/> or print out a form and mail it to the address below. These reports are vital to our organization. When the data is gathered and analyzed, it allows us to know the health of our bluebird population. It tells us where we have been successful and where we need to do more work. We need to know your statistics **whether you have fledged hundreds of bluebirds or none at all**. Please complete a separate form for each trail you are reporting on.

This year has been disappointing for many of us. **Put in the notes if you only had tree swallows and/or chickadees or no nesting at all.** I only have three pairs of nest and only had tree swallows.

If you prefer to send your report by mail you can print out a form and mail it to:

Wally Swanson, 128 South Buchanan, Waterville, MN 56096

Questions call Wally @ 507-362-8760. Email: swansonw@frontiernet.net

Undeliverable Newsletters Cost BBRP Money

Under bulk mailing restrictions, the postal service does not forward newsletters. Instead, they return them to BBRP with POSTAGE DUE. This has been a continuing problem. If you are a snowbird travelling south for the winter let us know the dates you leave and return. We can send you a newsletter to your winter address if you provide it to us OR you can request to receive newsletters by email instead and totally avoid this problem. If we get your newsletter returned to us, your next newsletter may be delayed until we can confirm your address. Also, if you move or change to/from a post office box let us know right away.

Contact Membership Chair Brianna Frisch, 507-459-4829, or email her at bri_kruse@hotmail.com if there is a change of address, or you can log into your account on our website to change your information.

Your help in keeping our mailing costs down will be greatly appreciated.

New Members

Mike & Stacy Shuda	Faribault, MN	Jerry & Dianne Barta	Medford, MN
Richard Powell	Owatonna, MN	Tate Running	Northfield, MN
Rick Fagen	White Bear Lake, MN	Brian Anderson	Faribault, MN
Wendy Andberg	Ham Lake, MN	Leslie Pilgrim	Mendota Heights, MN
Jim Walker	New Brighton, MN	Denise Olson	Dennison, MN
Sue & Todd Middleton	Northfield, MN	Bill & Peggy Keilen	Faribault, MN
Laurie Winzig	Faribault, MN	Mickey Dogotch	Faribault, MN

Donations

Our sincere thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Dave and Greta Schramm, Arden Hills, MN in memory of Bryon Schmidt
 Mike Jerešek, Rushford, MN in memory of Cheryl Kjos (A good Bluebird).
 Margaret Boike, Lindstrom, MN
 Roberta Moore Apple Valley, MN
 Julie Donaldson, Stillwater MN

Tidbits Continued

Board Members Retire

At the last board meeting Glen & Marlys Shirley announced that it was time to retire from the board after many years of service to the club in this capacity.

Editor's note: I plan to feature the Shirleys in an upcoming issue. As they are both over 80 I think they deserve to take it a little easier. If you have anything you would like to share, send it to edbbnews@outlook.com

Board Members Needed

The BBRP board will be considering applications from BBRP members to join us. BBRP does not have member-wide elections for board members. We are looking for enthusiastic individuals currently monitoring a bluebird trail who are seeking an avenue to learn more and share their knowledge with others. If this is you, please submit a short bio, information about your bluebird trail(s), and how you would like contribute to the running of BBRP. This can be sent to info@bbrp.org or mailed to P.O. Box 984, Faribault MN 55021.

Photos by Joan Schulz



Bluebird Recovery Program of MN

Bluebird Recovery Program Membership Enrollment in the Bluebird 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 and quarterly Newsletter. There are also annual 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

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please indicate how you'd like to receive the BBRP quarterly Newsletter ___ via email or ___ via USPS

If giving a membership as a gift please enter your name below so the recipient can be aware of your generosity:

Please mail form and payment to:
BBRP c/o Brianna Frisch, 11018 Taylor Hill Road Minnieska, 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.

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Photo by Doris Glander

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Editor BB News: Virginia Windschitl,

edbbnews@outlook.com

Photo by Doris Glander

Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 18 -
15th Annual SE Minnesota Bluebirders' Picnic
(see information inside)

Sept 30 – 5:30 p.m. An Evening Celebrating the Missis-
sippi River: Our Healing River.

Online or in person at Nicollet Island Pavilion,
Minneapolis – Friends of the Mississippi River

December 31, 2021 -
Trail Reports Due



Photos by Doris Glander



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.