



Bluebird News



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"

Volume 32 Issue 3

Summer 2022

BBRP Outreach

BBRP likes to spread the word about how we can help our bluebirds nest successfully.

For a number of years we have had County Coordinators and other volunteers out with our trailer at events such as Gammel Dag in Peterson MN and the Valley Grove Fall Social near Nerstrand.

On June 1, 2022, Bill and Mary Bailey again participated in the annual Savanna Spring Nature Area field trip for the Chatfield Schools' third graders. There were six stations of information and demonstration: Water Quality, Wildflowers, Binocular Use, Journaling, Trees (Bill), and Birds (Mary).

At the 12th Annual Forestry Field Day in Houston County, Mary Bailey had a table of information on BBRP and bluebirds and the advantages of the PVC style of nest-box for bluebirds and the other desirable species of cavity nesting songbirds. She also cautioned about predator control using the example of a decades-old sparrow

trap used to control sparrows on farms. This included a handout of plans for the trap itself.

In a new venture, we were asked to have an information table at the Minnesota State Fair at the

Eco Center for one day on Friday, August 26. (Thanks to David Schmidt, Sara Klasky, Brianna Frisch, George Brown, Virginia Windschitl, Stephen Engel & Nancy Klinger). We handed out the brochure "10 Top Tips" and answered questions.

We were at the Rice County Steam and Power show on Sept. 2-4 with our trailer again this year. (Thanks to Keith Radel, and Glen & Marlys Shirley for helping board members). A popular feature for both kids and adults was a game matching various eggs with pictures of the birds that laid them. Good conversations and we got several new members.

Board Chairman David Schmidt taught several classes in the spring for people interested in volunteering to help monitor already established trails.

We're looking for more event ideas for next year to expand our outreach. Please send us information about happenings in your area at info@bbrp.

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16th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic

On Saturday, August 20, over 20 people gathered at the home of Bill and Mary Bailey in rural Chatfield for the 16th Annual SE Minnesota Bluebirders' Picnic. These included at least five first timers. The potluck lunch was its usual success with a full and varied table of food.

During the lunch on Bailey's wraparound covered porch overlooking one of their ponds, the group enjoyed an afternoon of fellowship and sharing. Then followed a drawing for door prizes. The highlight of the afternoon was a demonstration by Bill of a reinforced large predator live trap, long-term bird feeders, a hanging oriole feeder, and PVC bluebird box construction methods.

Another highlight of the day was when first-time attendee Hanna Elshoff became a lifetime member of BBRP. She is a published author and a regional celebrity. This has happened before, a first-time attendee becoming a lifetime member at a SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic.



Left:
Bill Bailey demonstrates items he made which are useful in promoting nature.

Right:
Hanna Elshoff of Chatfield, SE MN's newest lifetime member.



Attendees at the 16th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic



HELPFUL BLUEBIRDERS SAVE ESTABLISHED BB TRAIL!

A big **THANK YOU** is shouted out from Marlys Shirley and her neighborhood's bluebirds for the successful season just concluded on her bluebird trail! Unable to get around well enough to continue the weekly monitoring after about 20 years on her established 17 site bluebird trail, Marlys had mentioned to BBRP Board chairperson, David Schmidt, that she would be pulling her bluebird boxes. David had a spring bluebird workshop scheduled in a nearby town and called for helpers that would share the monitoring of this trail to keep the returning bluebirds successful in this area. Husband Glen Shirley prepared the sites by making sure all the boxes and poles were in good shape. Sydney Seufer set up the schedule for the weekly

checking and began the routine in May. When one helper did not work out, Bob Edmunds, Virginia Windschitl, and Marilyn Suter stepped up to fill out the summer's schedule of weekly box checking to be sure the bluebirds were safe from predators, had clean boxes, and record each site's progress. At season's end, Bob suggested all gather at a restaurant to get to meet each other, share stories and information, etc. and a good time was had by all on a lovely late August evening. The tally was discussed so that the final report could be turned in to the BBRP of MN for the state report, and all were delighted to think of 71 new bluebirds out in our world from this bluebird Trail of Delight having been adopted and shared by this wonderful team of SYDNEY, BOB, MARILYN, VIRGINIA, DAVID AND GLEN!



Keith Radel, Marilyn Suter, and Marlys Shirley
at Rice County Steam & Gas show, Dundas

Reporting Is Important

So far we have received close to 100 reports so far. Things seem to be looking up from last year. The final deadline is the end of the year, but we encourage you to report now since the nesting season has ended.

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. Put in the notes if you only had tree swallows and/or chickadees or no nesting at all.**

Please complete a separate form for each trail you are reporting on.

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

Editor's Corner

Sandhill Cranes

I have enjoyed hearing sandhill cranes in the lowland across the road from my house throughout the summer the last few years. I don't ever remember hearing them there as I was growing up. The first time I saw sandhill cranes was on an Audubon field trip to Crex Meadows in northern Wisconsin many years ago.

Al Batt had someone ask him for a good place to see sandhill cranes in southern Minnesota and wondered when the colts can fly. He answered "Sandhill cranes lay eggs in April, incubation takes about a month and a colt takes its first flight when it's 65-75 days old. The young remain with their parents for 9-10 months, accompanying them in migration. There are three (not all in Minnesota) wonderful places to see them. The wetlands at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, a 30,700-acre refuge north of the Twin Cities, provide prime habitat for 50 pairs of nesting sandhill cranes and in September and October, thousands of cranes gather at the refuge before migrating. Thousands of greater sandhill cranes gather at Crex Meadows near Grantsburg, Wisconsin, in October and early November, where they feed in the crop fields during the day and roost in the sedge marshes at night. The International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, is the only place in the world where visitors can see all 15 species of cranes. It's open from May 1 to October 31."

Events at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area

102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, Wisconsin

(For info or to register for programs go online to crexmeadows.org)

Saturday, October 8

Visit Crex Meadows on October 8th for their annual Fall Wildlife Festival. There will be presentations by staff, LIVE ANIMALS, exhibitors, activities for families, tours, hikes, and a pancake breakfast!

October 8 & 15, 5:00 pm– 7:00 pm

Meet at the Crex Meadows Visitor Center then carpool through the state wildlife area to watch the Sandhill Cranes fly in from their day-time feeding grounds to their nightly roosting grounds on the 30,000-acre wildlife area.

Photographs Wanted

We are always looking for photos that we can use in our newsletter. If you have photos you would like to share, send them to edbbnews@outlook.com

Board Members Wanted

It would be good to add at least one more board member. We require that board members either have a trail of their own or are part of a team that monitors a trail.

If you or anyone you know might be interested, email to info@bbrp.org

MEMBERS, our newsletter is now available via email. With our new Membership System you can log into your personal account and indicate you'd like to receive future newsletters via email. This saves us printing and mailing costs.

Fall Trail Maintenance

Now that the nesting season is over there are still things you can do this fall to prepare for a successful season next year. Get out and enjoy some sunny fall days while checking the condition of your trail's nestboxes and possibly considering the relocation of boxes that are unproductive or have been attracting wrens or house sparrows.

Make sure boxes are clean. If there is some clean grass in the box some people prefer to leave it. Leaving boxes up rather than taking them down in the fall can provide life-protecting shelter for birds who might need to huddle together to keep warm if the weather suddenly turns bitterly cold in fall or early spring.

Check the condition of your nestboxes. Is the roof still in good condition? Do drainage holes need to be cleaned. Is the floor still tight? Water leakage will result in wet nests and nestlings lost to hypothermia. Was the entrance hole enlarged? Is the mounting post stable and is the box securely attached? Bring tools & supplies, such as replacement roofs (PVC roofs are much more durable) along for minor repairs and a few extra boxes in case boxes need major repairs. Rehabilitating removed boxes can be a winter project for you (or for those of us workshop-challenged, your nearby nestbox expert handyman).

Has the habitat changed? Is the nearby area no longer mowed or grazed? Taller grass with scrub trees and bushes become wren and house sparrow habitat. Is it in a lowland near wetlands that are more attractive to tree swallows? If so, it is time to relocate boxes to more suitable habitat. Habitat should include a fence line, overhead wires or dead tree branches nearby for perching as bluebirds search for food. If bluebirds don't like the habitat, they will avoid your nestboxes.

Are boxes too close together? Check your records to see if adjoining boxes have been used. The recommendation is 100 yards minimum, 125 to 150 yards may be better unless the boxes are in excellent habitat or the view between boxes is blocked by a hill or trees. If your boxes are singles and swallows use more than 50% of your boxes, try pairing them 10-15 feet apart and space each pairing 125-150 yards apart.

If mice have been a problem and you have a wooden box with a hinged side, leave it open for the winter. Likewise, the PVC boxes can be turned with the hole facing inward to prevent mice from nesting in them over winter. This will also prevent sparrows from claiming the box before bluebirds return.

Woodworking Projects for Winter

Check out downloadable plans for the Gilbertson PVC Box, Gilwood Slot Box, Peterson Box, and Xbox Bluebird Nest Box on our website: <https://bbrp.org/nest-box-informational/>

There are also plans for mealworm feeders online:

<http://nestboxbuilder.com/nestbox-plans-for-bluebirds.html#mealworm>

Photos by Doris Glander



New County Coordinators

We welcome two new County Coordinators:

Cynthia Sabinske, from Ghent, is an additional coordinator in Lyon County. She has been monitoring and maintaining a trail at Candem State Park and just purchased ten new boxes for upgrades on that trail.

Jon Allen, recently retired Park Supervisor for the city of Savage, has joined us as a coordinator for Scott County. He has been actively maintaining trails and mentoring volunteers in his area for trails at McColl Pond Environmental Learning Center and Canterbury Park in Savage.

Fillmore County Report:

A number of local bluebirders have reported having success this summer. That is way better than last year when a lot of them said they never saw a bluebird all season.

My trail was very successful. 32 of my 33 boxes produced a least one brood of bluebirds. It was a fun year to monitor my trail. As of 8-18-22 there are still 4 boxes that were active. One box was on her 3rd brood.

Keeping my fingers crossed that local bluebirders have had similar results as mine. I will be starting to get reports for Wally S. shortly from Fillmore and Houston bluebirders.

Mike Jeresek, Fillmore and Houston County Coordinator

New Members

June 2022	July 2022	August 2022
Jeanne Eull	David Olson Fred Elingson Donald Doeksen	Dan Humay Hanna Elshoff

Thank you to Margaret Boike of Lindstrom for her generous donation.

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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Photo by Doris Glander

Upcoming Events

September 22 - September 25

Hawk Ridge 50th Anniversary & Hawk Weekend Festival

<https://www.hawkridge.org/event/hawk-weekend-festival-2021/>

Saturday, October 1

Birdwatching Trek @ Rapids Lake Education & Visitor Center

(Near Carver MN) Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, October 1

Wildlife Festival - Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge

Free, family-friendly 27th Annual Wildlife Festival from 10 am to 2 pm!

Saturday, October 1

Frontenac State Park 65th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, October 2

Bird Banding Program

Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester, 1:30 PM — 2:30 PM

\$4, Free for members, pre-registration required

Sunday, October 8

Birdwatching Trek @ Old Cedar Avenue

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Sunday, October 16

Birdwatching Trek @ Bass Ponds

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

*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

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