



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"

Bluebird News



Volume 28 Issue 3

Summer 2018

"Lost Creek Hiking Trail" By Mary Bailey

Established in 2011, the Lost Creek Hiking Trail in Chatfield, in Southeast MN, offers a wide variety of habitats and terrains and includes a bluebird presence in a trail tended by Tim Gossman. Leading from the Groen Park Trailhead near the center of Chatfield it travels over six miles through forests, prairie, pasture and agricultural land to the Ninebark Road Trailhead (County Road 101) west of the city.

Consisting of natural soil and grass, the trail is free and open to hikers and snowshoers year round, but closed to all during deer firearms hunting season. It is not open for foraging or biking, and dogs are not allowed on part of the trail. Much of the trail is due to the generosity of landowners who allow this limited access. The trail is maintained by the Bluff Country Hiking Club which supports events and welcomes new members.

The Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation and one of the

landowners have placed directional and interpretive signs along the trail to make it more meaningful for hikers,

mation visit www.bluffcountryhikingclub.org.

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and brochures for the trail and educational hike can be found at either trailhead. For more infor-



Ardella Walsh of Rochester helps her grandfather Tim Gossman of Chatfield as they monitor the bluebird trail on the Lost Creek Hiking Trail (See related article). She is in charge of the vanilla spray bottle which she affirms "Smells like cookies!"

"13th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic" By Mary Bailey

The terrible weather caused us to forgo our annual Bluebird Expo, but weather will not be a problem at the 13th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic in Chatfield on September 15. We are fortunate enough to have the use of the hall at the Chatfield United Methodist Church at 124 Fillmore Street, so wind or rain won't matter much. Watch for the bluebird directional signs as you drive through Chatfield.

We gather there at noon, and it is a potluck lunch with the main course, tableware and beverages provided by Bill and Mary Bailey. Bring a dish to share if you wish; bluebirders are known to be

very good cooks! There will be awards and door prizes.

It is a comfortable way to wrap up the season and share stories of our bluebird trail experiences. This season was filled with challenges from Mother Nature, and it will be helpful to talk to each other for comparison and ideas for next year.

Anyone who is interested in bluebirds is welcome and that includes those from outside the SE MN region. We would love to see you then.

Please RSVP to Mary Bailey at (507) 867-9118; feel free to text your RSVP.

"Mailbox Bluebirds" By Mary Roen

Checking my Bluebird trail of 81 boxes in western Wisconsin has often brought surprises, and this year was no exception. I only have 16 boxes on our own property and the rest are on property belonging to family, friends and public lands.

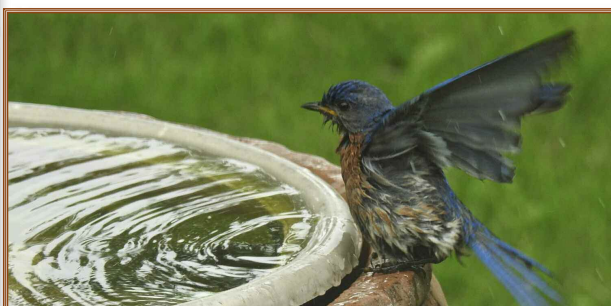
One day as I was monitoring nest boxes by my sister's house, my great nephews ran to me and said, "there is a nest in the old mailbox and we think it is a Bluebird!" I went to check and sure enough, an old abandoned black plastic mailbox without a door had a grass nest way in the back. With the zoom on my camera I could see that there were Bluebird eggs in the nest. Now I had a conundrum. Do I leave the nest as it is, in an open mailbox, about 4 feet of the ground and hope for the best, that no predators would get at it? I just couldn't do that.

My husband and brother-in-law made a wooden door for the mailbox and drilled a 1.5 inch entrance hole in it. They attached it by screws on the sides so it would swivel open for nest checks, and drilled ventilation holes in the sides of the mailbox.

The next time I checked the mailbox, the eggs had hatched and the female Bluebird was nearby. Subsequent monitoring showed that the nestlings were thriving. They fledged about August 1. Now I wonder, what kind of a nest box will these birds look for when they nest next year?



Photos by Doris Glander



Tidbits

*Photos taken by Mary Riedeman of rural Chatfield. She enjoys the bluebirds which fledge out of the nestboxes near her house. They are monitored by Bill Bailey of Chatfield.
"These bluebirds are on their third nesting in this tough season."*



"Transitions" by Loren "Murph" Murphy



My Bluebird friends Dick and Lori Wobschall, have been dedicated Bluebirders for many years. They worked together with Lori driving the vehicle as Dick checked his trails. He often had 95 or 98 bluebird fledging count a year, trying to get to the 100 count bar. He never gave up. Wrens plagued him and wrecked his nests, but he did get the 100 club bar one year.

In 2017, when turning 85, he decided to cut back some on his trail. I found a nice young couple with little boys to take over some of his trail and he asked me if I knew someone who could use a dozen PVC nestboxes. I knew Jim Newport could use a few updated nestboxes, so Dick said to give them to him. I usually get the nestboxes and fix the boxes back up so they can be used. I am telling you this because when I went to pick them up he had them all fixed up looking like new, so I could give them to Jim right away.

That's what Mr. Wobschall (which I call him) would do. He is a conscientious and responsible man. Thanks for all you have done for the Bluebird Recovery Program over all these years,

Your Friend, Loren "Murph" Murphy

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 membership@bbrpmn.org if this applies to you. Your help in keeping our costs down is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

"Rushford's Jeresek devotes summers to bluebird recovery" By Melody Swofford

Reprinted from the Tri-County Record with permission

Spotting a bluebird used to be a rare event in Minnesota, let alone the Tri-County area. Thanks to the efforts of people like Mike Jeresek that's changing in a big way.

Jeresek, who taught and coached in the Rushford and Rushford-Peterson districts for 34 years, has turned his considerable energy and passion toward helping bluebirds. An active member of the Bluebird Recovery Program since 2002, Jeresek is committed to bringing bluebirds back for future generations. "I've always had a keen interest in the outdoors, primarily with my father when I was a kid," he said. "I was an avid hunter and fisherman, but not so much anymore. I love wildlife and enjoy giving back to nature."

Giving back, indeed. Jeresek monitors 50 bluebird houses weekly, on a route that stretches from the edge of Rushford to Money Creek. Pressed for the amount of miles he logs while checking his bluebird houses, Jeresek chuckled, "My wife asks me the same thing, and the answer is 'I don't know.' I don't keep track of the miles. I just enjoy visiting all my bird houses and ensuring the hatchlings are healthy and thriving."

While bluebirds are not on the endangered species list, their numbers dropped greatly in 1983 due to a huge loss of natural habitat. During this period, the fledging count was estimated to be just 1,200 in the state of Minnesota. As a result of the Bluebird Recovery Program, bluebird numbers swelled to 25,000 statewide in 2012.

Of course much of this recovery is the result of local volunteers like Jeresek, whose diligent work (and the work of his 60 contacts as well) has resulted in the fledging of as many as 479 birds from his 50 houses in a single season.

"Minnesota's numbers are growing," Jeresek said. "In fact, out of 60 members from four counties, there was an annual cumulative count of 1,000 fledgings, of which 750 came from the Rushford and Peterson area."

It takes Jeresek about two hours to cover his route. "Every Saturday I leave in the morning and travel to each and every house, to check on the hatchlings or eggs," he said. "I keep an accurate record of how many chicks are in each nest. I follow this routine for a little over a month, right up until they leave the nest safely, which is called fledging."

According to Jeresek, one female can have several nesting cycles in a single season, each lasting about the same length of time. Usually a female will start with five to seven eggs in her first cycle, then the numbers drop by at least one egg thereafter. Nesting success rates depend on many variables such as attacks by a rival bird, such as a wren, or exposure to cold due to unusual weather change.

But the most common threat to chick survival is the common and abundant buffalo gnat. "The gnats infest the nest and attack the chicks under their wings where there are no feathers, just skin," Jeresek said. "Chicks can die from the bites."

But Jeresek has found a simple solution for warding off gnats. "I use the same vanilla body spray that is used at picnics or outdoor gatherings," he said. "Gnats are attracted to the natural emitting of carbon dioxide from their [bluebird] bodies, and the vanilla scent confuses the gnat's sense of smell and they don't attack the chicks. I spray the roof of each house with the vanilla and lightly mist the chicks from a distance. This is an effective tool to keep the gnats away and maintain their survival rate."



Jeresek was kind enough to show a couple of his bluebird houses near Rushford. With his spray bottle in hand, Jeresek slowly approached the first house, which he'd placed in an open area of mowed high ground. Such a location makes it easier for bluebirds to hunt insects and feed their young.

"Feeding the young is a family affair," Jeresek said. "This means that newly fledged birds hunt insects and return to the nest, and give the food to their mother, who then jumps in the house and feeds the new hatchlings. The scouts (males) do this as well."

Jeresek gently opened the bird house where there were four beautiful featherless chicks with open beaks, blindly reaching up for food. Though Jeresek sprayed the roof of the nest with his vanilla, he left the chicks alone, noting they were too young. Then he gently placed the house back in its spot.

The mother bluebird returned to the nest. Noting the return of this female, Jeresek said, "Some members establish a relationship with the birds and train them to come at a certain time to a dinner of meal worms. They know we are here for them."

The second encounter was just as enriching as the first, only these chicks were older and had feathers. Again Jeresek sprayed the roof of the house, then gently sprayed a mist over the nestlings which were old enough and could easily tolerate the vanilla scent.

Jeresek also noted a nearby cemetery, which he said was a good spot for a bluebird house because it was open, on high ground, and always freshly mowed. "The birds will sit on top of the highest epitaph and hunt for the juiciest insects to feed their young," he said.

When asked if the birds migrated during the winter, Jeresek smiled and said, "They are snow birds like my wife and I. We go to Alabama, and my bluebirds go to Texas, Missouri and Arkansas. We all meet back here in the spring to do it all over again."

Jeresek has shared his passion for bluebirds with many, and hopes that even more people will join in ensuring their survival. "I hope to see more people become involved. If that happens, we will see more of these beautiful birds. Once you develop a population, they will keep coming back."



Photo by Doris Glander

“Dorene Scriven, Pioneer Founder of BBRP, Passes in June 2018” by Marlys Shirley, BBRP Secretary

In 1978 a small Bluebird Club, made up of 12 members of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, reported 22 fledglings in their first year! Among those original pioneers of BBRP was Dorene Scriven, and the publication and distribution of informational materials, the quarterly Bluebird News, workshops for the public, an Annual Conference, and publishing of the acclaimed book “Bluebird Trails, A Guide to Success”, was accomplished under her early leadership. Our BBRP Secretary received word of her passing on June 25, 2018 from her son. He stated that a celebration of her life would be organized and that the date, time, and place would be given to BBRP when arrangements had been completed.

Doreen Scriven *by Virginia Windschiti*

While growing up, Doreen Scriven lived next to an extensive wildlife preserve south of San Francisco and developed a deep love of nature. She graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a degree in biological sciences. She married and had three children. Her husband's academic career took the family to the East Coast, back to Berkeley, and finally to the University of MN, Minneapolis in 1959.

Until 1989 she worked part-time as a medical editor, personal secretary and newsletter editor. A charter member of the Bluebird Recovery Program Committee, she also served as the chair of BBRP for a number of years. She became one of the foremost bluebird authorities and shared her knowledge by publishing several editions of her book “Bluebird Trails.”

She also served on the board of directors of both the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis and the North American Bluebird Society. Significant accomplishments included receiving the Conservationist of the Year Award from the Minneapolis Audubon Chapter, the North American Bluebird Society Award for Significant Contributions to Bluebird Conservation, and the KARE 11 TV “Eleven Who Care” Award.

She maintained, year-round, a 119-acre wildlife preserve adjacent to Lake Maria State Park in Central Minnesota, where she monitored 105 bluebird boxes. In 2014 Doreen donated 60 acres to Lake Maria State Park. The property lies on the western edge of Lake Maria State Park and was within the statutory boundary of the park west of Monticello. She had held the property in a conservation easement for many years through the RIM program to protect and improve wildlife habitat and restore native vegetation. She wanted to have the land protected and managed and so she donated the property to the state park. The land provides an additional buffer along the northwest shoreline of Maria Lake and some additional hiking trails for park visitors. Lake Maria State Park was created in 1963.

Board Members Needed

The BBRP board would like to find some enthusiastic bluebirders to join the board. Because of several resignations in the last several months, the board will be considering applications from BBRP members to join the board. BBRP does not have member-wide elections. The current board will choose individuals they feel have the skills needed to help accomplish BBRP's mission. We would especially be interested in individuals with backgrounds in non-profits, computer technology (web and/or database skills), education, or special event organizing. Would you like to help encourage, inspire and educate others about bluebirds?

If interested, submit a short bio, information about your bluebird trail(s), and why you think you can contribute to the running of BBRP. This can be sent to edbbnews@outlook.com or mailed to P.O. Box 984, Faribault MN 55021.

Newsletter Contributions Welcome

We encourage and invite everyone to be a part of the newsletter. We'd love to hear your stories and see your photos. You can submit them to edbbnews@outlook.com.

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 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
395 Williams Street • Lewiston, MN 55952

New Members

Kate & Brad Lynne - Preston, MN • Nanette Rodgers - Northfield, MN • Amy Ordahl - Savage, MN
Wally Siewert - Frontenac, MN • Beverly Hughes - Owatonna, MN

16th Annual South Central Bluebirder's Potluck Picnic

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2018, 5:30PM, RIVERBEND NATURE CENTER

1000 Rustad RD, Faribault, MN 55021 -- Follow the Bluebird signs.

Refreshments, Hot Sandwiches, Buns and Tableware provided.

Please bring a hot dish, salad, or dessert to share.

There will be door prizes, also Bluebird nestboxes will be available.

Please fill out your YEARLY BLUEBIRD REPORT FORM and bring it with you,
or we can help fill it out.

PLEASE FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING RSVP BY SEPTEMBER 15TH

WE KNOW THEN HOW MANY TO PREPARE FOR

SEND TO - LOREN MURPHY, 14 SO MITCHELL DR, FARIBAULT MN 55021

OR CALL 1-507-334-7958, PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE IF WE ARE NOT
AVAILABLE

16th ANNUAL SOUTH CENTRAL BLUEBIRDER'S POT LUCK PICNIC

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2018, 5:30PM, RIVERBEND NATURE CENTER

RSVP BY SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2018

_____ I am (we are) coming

Please print nametags as follows _____



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 mnbbluebirder@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	SWIFT Bill Hoberg Benson 320-843-3988
ANOKA Jeanne Wilkinson Anoka 763-229-9972	DAKOTA Marlys Shirley Farmington 952-469-3510	HOUSTON Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573	LE SUEUR Bruce Smisek Montgomery 507-364-8966	POPE Bruce & Barb Mulvaney Glenwood 320-278-3763	WABASHA Carol & Dale Nibbe Lake City 651-345-2410
BELTRAMI Jim Humeniuk Bemidji 218-766-1390	David Schmidt Inver Grove Heights 651-457-9195	HUBBARD Ron Jensen Park Rapids 218-732-4205	Ben Bartusek New Prague 952-758-3398	RAMSEY George Brown White Bear Lake 651-429-1978	WADENA Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401
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CHISAGO Robert Walz North Branch 651-307-4679				STEARNS Vacant	

BBRP Board Members

Mary Bailey
Chatfield, MN
507-867-9118
marycbluebird@gmail.com

Brianna Frisch (Membership)
Lewiston, MN
507-459-4829
membership@bbrpmn.org
bri_kruse@hotmail.com

Carrol Johnson (State Coordinator)
Northfield, MN
C-507-649-0126 H-507-664-9433
mnbbluebirder@hotmail.com

Marlys (Secretary) and Glen Shirley
Farmington, MN 55024
952-469-3510
gshirley@frontiernet.net

Bruce and Sheila (Treasurer) Smisek
Montgomery, MN
952-292-9165
montgomerysodco@gmail.com
sheilasmisek@yahoo.com
treasurer@BBRPMN.org

Marilyn Suter
Farmington, MN
C-651-900-4335 H-651-460-4236
Zsui1@frontier.com

Wally Swanson
Waterville, MN
507-380-4106
swansonw@frontiernet.net

Virginia Windschitl
(Newsletter Editor)
Farmington, MN
651-463-8056
edbbnews@outlook.com

Bluebird Recovery Program
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis



P.O. Box 984
Faribault, MN 55021

"Raising back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"

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edbbnews@outlook.com

Photo by Doris Glander

Upcoming Events

September 8, 2018 - Saturday
BBRP Ed. Booth Taste of the Trail
Peterson MN



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."

September 15, 2018
Trail Reports for the 2018 Nesting Season Due

September 15, 2018 – Saturday
13th Annual Southeastern Minnesota Bluebirders' Picnic
Chatfield MN



September 22, 2018 – Saturday
16th Annual South Central Bluebirders' Picnic
Riverbend Nature Center, Faribault MN



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.