



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations"

Bluebird News



Volume 29 Issue 3

Summer 2019

Bluebirds and Forests? You Bet! by Mary Bailey

If there were every any doubt as to whether the people of SE MN are environmentally minded, that doubt was dispelled on the evening of Wednesday, July 24, 2019 at the Ninth Annual Forestry Field Day held at the conservation-award-winning Bailey Brothers' Farm in Chatfield. Over 65 people gathered for a narrated hike centered around the theme of "Create Your Forest. Create Your Legacy." Originally inaugurated on Bailey land and first suggested by Bill Bailey, the field days in past years have covered a variety of conservation topics of interest to forest land owners. This one featured two slide shows running for attendees to watch. One was a drone video taken by Guy Napurski and gave a stunning aerial view of the area in fall color. Produced by Bill and Mary Bailey, the other on a larger screen, showed examples of good forestry practices and the results they achieve. The hike featured interpretive signs and was narrated by Bill Bailey who explained the examples and answered questions.

The bluebird connection was presented by Mary Bailey and linked to the theme of this year's event. The Lost Creek Hiking Trail, which winds through over six miles of the Chatfield countryside and through over two miles of Bailey property, has a successful bluebird trail monitored from its inception by BBRP member and Bluff Country Hiking Club member Tim Gosman.

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He spoke of its history and that of the bluebird trail at Savanna Spring Nature Area just north of the city of Chatfield. That trail is monitored by BBRP member Quint Lohse. It was inaugurated by Mary Bailey and her late husband Len Suttinger and was dedicated to his memory shortly after his passing in 2004. Sponsors of the event included the MN Department of Natural Resources, High Point Realty, the Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District, and the MN Forestry Association; and they provided the light supper which preceded the event. Besides the private land owners, city, county, and state officials were represented in those attending the forestry field day.



EDITOR'S NOTES

News from the BBRP Board...

After 40 years of affiliation with the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota has spread its wings and fledged into the world as an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

With strong board leadership and loyal bluebirding friends, our mission remains the same: "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 native cavity nesters."

All BBRP events, programs and the annual Expo will continue to be our focus as we move forward into our next 40 years.

We added a new board member, a communications position. Karah Bausch Olson, is an associate Creative Director at Target Corporation. She looks forward to helping spread the word about the 2020 Expo, assisting with membership and county coordinator communications and keeping us current on social media.

With this issue of the Bluebird News we're introducing a quarterly article from our County coordinators. With bluebirders all over the State we thought it would be a good idea to give them a voice in the Newsletter. It's called County Coordinator's Corner.

Virginia Windschitl

Notes from our Expo Chair, by Jeanie Mortenson

Hello to you all:

I hope you are having a great summer and having success with the bluebirds. I know it's been pretty challenging with the gnats, flies, and always the wrens. It has been a very wet, hot summer; it seems all of 2019 has been challenging weather wise.

I heard from Mike and Jeanne Murphy who live in Montevideo in Chippewa County. They had a very sad thing happen to them with their bluebirds. They have 15 acres of grassland surrounding their property. They said they faithfully monitored their trail of 12 houses (6 pairs) for several years, never giving up hope that a bluebird would arrive. Finally they had 4 blue eggs.

Continued on Page 3

County Coordinator Corner**BBRP of MN's Reach Extends to Tennessee**

One of our Dakota County coordinators has an adult son and family living in Tennessee. Conversations in late 2017 regarding bluebirds culminated in four BBRP Gilbertson nest boxes making their way to Germantown, TN to be placed in the park adjoining the son's house.

The son was born and raised in the heart of south-eastern Minnesota's bluebird territory, Northfield, MN. Having a parent very involved in Minnesota bluebirding made for an easy decision to begin a bluebird trail of his own when mention of such was discussed at a Germantown community meeting.

When the father visited the son in the winter of 2018 he brought with him four bluebird nest boxes. After a walk through the park to determine good locations, a trail was created with the boxes placed the proper distance apart to see if bluebirds could be attracted to nest.

The spring of 2018 proved hopeful, with great expectation and on March 31 he had two blue eggs in one box. A week later there was one egg in another box, but the box with the two eggs now had only a few broken shell pieces and the beginnings of a new nest over the old. That was a little discouraging for a novice bluebirder, but the excitement built the following week when the takeover nest had five eggs.

As spring turned into summer new issues unfolded. A cowbird egg was found in with the five beautiful bluebird eggs. That egg was removed. The cowbird didn't like it and the bluebird eggs were destroyed and another nest replaced them. Another active bluebird nest was overrun by a chickadee nest which also had a cowbird egg in it. Needless to say, it wasn't a good first year for our transplanted Northfielder.

Not to despair, a regrouping of father and son in October of 2018 with two more BBRP Gilbertson boxes in tow. The analysis said instead of four single boxes let's try three sets of paired boxes. Hopefully if the competition is as great in 2019 as it was in 2018 the pairs may help.

Fast forward to March 31, 2019 and a photo arrives from Germantown with a nest containing four white eggs and a note, "What are these?" After a return note explaining up to 5% of bluebirds lay white eggs all was well. A week later another note and another box of five white eggs. Those two boxes successfully produce eight bluebird babies,



Continued on Page 3

BBRP of MN's Reach Extends to Tennessee, cont.

and the Germantown son was really excited.

By early June another nest appeared in the third pair of boxes containing four more white eggs. All of a sudden the odds are really turning toward a Las Vegas style beat. They made it to fledging level and out of the nest. Meanwhile by mid-July, four more eggs back in one of the other pairs, so far no predation, no other species in any other nest boxes and still NO blue eggs. A complete turnaround from 2018. At the time of this writing, July 30th, one more bluebird nest and yes, white eggs again. A very happy second year for a Tennessee bluebirder and a pretty proud Minnesota Dad.

A final note to all our bluebirding friends out there, don't forget to report YOUR 2019 bluebird results to BBRP, at www.bbrp.org/report-forms.

**Notes from our Expo Chair, by Jeanie Mortenson, Cont.**

They were very excited when they hatched, fed meal worms and everything was good. On day 9 they went to check the babies to find them all dead; also they had a house with 4 baby tree swallows and they also were dead. There was no sign of a struggle, or injury. They had seen the female go in and out of the nest at 9 am and by 7 pm they were all dead. They thought of the heat as it was so very hot. They are surrounded by farmland, and all the farmers sprayed the soybeans the last day or so. It is so hard to lose those little babies, we've all had that happen and it hurts so.

I hope everyone can attend our Expo which will be at Cannon Falls High School on April 18, 2020. The speakers are all lined up and it should be a very informative program. I still get emails about Ryan Salisbury's program on Lyme disease. When you hear it from someone who has gone through the disease and is still suffering, it really makes you more aware of this awful tick problem.

We are always looking for help at the Expo and we sure could use some help at the silent auction table. If there is anyone who would like to volunteer to help, it would be much appreciated. Let me know if you can help, it would be pulling bid sheets and tallying up.

In the spring newsletter I thanked all you wonderful people who donated to our silent auction. There was one name left out. It was Ace Electrical Contractors; they donated those great Twins tickets. Thank you again, it was a great donation.

Glen Shirley does the advertising for the Expo. He makes posters and puts out registration forms at bird stores in many places. We always hope we get lots of people coming because of them. This year we got lots of new members from it; one was Linda McGinty. She called me about the Expo and had lots of questions about it. I explained all we did and had, including the silent auction. She then emailed me a few days later to see if we could use some things for it. I said yes; she was the one who got us the Twins tickets and the generous gift card from Rudy Luther. No matter how big or small, everything that is donated is appreciated. Thanks again to all of you who donated and came to our Expo.

Let's hope we have a beautiful colorful fall. It is one of my favorite times of year; but my husband always reminds me of what will be coming next. Remember to get your bluebird reports in to Wally or on line.

Remember to circle April 18th, 2020 on your calendar for the Expo. Hope to see you then.

Notes from the Field

From the Anoka County coordinator:

This year we had a high percentage of eggs (36%) that wouldn't hatch. Four weeks in a row the eggs would be warm with the mother bluebird faithfully trying to incubate them... no hatching. When I cleaned out a nest box today, I found a total of 14 unhatched eggs. Three nests had been built on top of each other with the unhatched eggs buried under the next nest. We check the nests weekly and were wondering what happened to the 5th week's cold eggs to then discover a batch of warm eggs the following week. This happened in another nest that totaled 15 unhatched eggs for the summer. Persistence didn't pay off for these two bluebird families.

On another note, we had 3 nests (1 bluebird and 2 tree swallows) that the week before had large fledglings ready to fly. To our dismay, we found each group dead and rotting the next week in their nest boxes. It looks like we'll be far short of our total number of fledglings this year, 75 versus 111 last year, 114 in 2017 and 121 in 2016. I wonder if others are seeing similar results...

We "lost" three PVC pipe type houses at Green Haven golf course in Anoka. One was stolen, one was hit by a golf ball (cracked open a hole and fell to the ground), and one had an enlarged hole chewed around by a squirrel. All our houses are on pipes for protection from predators. Obviously, this one house was too close to a tree. In the next couple of weeks we'll be moving some houses and ordering replacement Gilbertson PVC type houses.

Jeanne Wilkinson, 763-229-9972,
jgwilk@comcast.net

2019 Report from Southeast Minnesota:

*submitted by: Mike Jeresek
Fillmore and Houston county coordinator*

As I write this report on 8-3-19 the 2019 season can be summed up in one word...frustrating.

My trail of 39 sites has produced only 163 fledglings so far. Far below my ten year average of 252.5 fledglings. I am sure I won't break the 200 mark for the first time since 2007. Currently have 12 boxes that are still active. I will keep my fingers crossed that they are successful.

The following is a list of problems from this season:

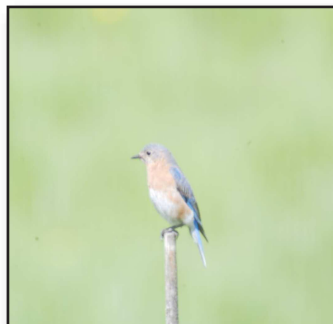
1. Dead scouts found in boxes in early April.

2. Wrens removing eggs and chicks from boxes.
3. Sparrows removing eggs from boxes. I have trapped over 20 sparrows this year. Normally I only trap 2 or 3 per season.
4. Dead chicks due to wet nests. I plan to use Keith Radel's spinner set-up on several of my boxes next year.
5. A high number of unhatched eggs. No clue as to why.

Townie Bluebirds in SE MN, by Mary Bailey

Despite the overwhelming presence of buffalo gnats to plague our baby bluebirds this season, we are again blessed with bluebirds occupying nest-boxes in neighborhoods in Olmsted and Fillmore counties.

The accompanying pictures are proof that bluebirds are comfortable here. Dan Hollerman took the pictures near his business "Computer Danamics" near downtown Chatfield, and Rev Deb Collum reported double nestings at the Chatfield United Methodist Church in the heart of the city. Also, in his SW Rochester neighborhood, Joe Stancl has had a double nesting after diligently fighting predators for several seasons. All three of these bluebirders exemplify the importance of weekly nest box monitoring and of frequent spraying with vanilla to ward off the gnats. As county coordinator for both counties, I have the pleasure of this kind of communication from my bluebirders; and it is gratifying to see how this dedication pays off.



NEW MEMBERS (as of June 30, 2019)

Pat & Arne Sorenson Golden Valley MN
 Myron Mortel & Sandy Tauferner Ellsworth, WI
 Dawn Grefe Dundas, MN
 Carissa Erickson Faribault, MN
 Carol Saroie Waterville, MN
 Tim Huston River Falls, WI
 Steven Fetzek Lakeville, MN
 Lynn Lally Savage, MN
 Dana Hornquist Golden Valley, MN
 Connie Morey Farmington, MN

Kay B Aurand Woodbury, MN
 Brian McDonald Cannon Falls, MN
 Barry Scanlan Minneapolis, MN
 William Roos Bloomington, MN
 Jim Wolf Woodbury, MN
 Karen Trudell Golden Valley, MN
 Shannen Lach Kameya St. Paul, MN
 Nikki Wood Plymouth, MN
 Sue Hancock Owatonna, MN

17th Annual South Central Bluebirder's Potluck Picnic

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2019, 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 14th

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

17TH ANNUAL SOUTH CENTRAL BLUEBIRDER'S POT LUCK PICNIC

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2019, 5:30PM, RIVERBEND NATURE CENTER

RSVP BY SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2019

_____ I am (we are) coming

Please print nametags as follows _____

Southeastern Minnesota Bluebirders' Picnic by Mary Bailey

Dear Bluebirders,

It has been a season like no other with the late start and the terrible predation of gnats. I thank all of you for all your efforts and perseverance. Please now report your results. This can be done electronically at www.bbrp.org or you can print a form and mail it in. I have sent in a report electronically, and it is indeed working – unlike last year. The form is fairly brief and does not take long.

Also, for those of you who have fledged more than 100 bluebirds, please let me know and how many bars you will need. I can order them for this year. If you are new to this, I can order the patch(es) for you as well.

Our little reward for this difficult season is our picnic.

Mary Bailey

**14th ANNUAL
SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA BLUEBIRDERS' PICNIC**

DATE: Saturday, September 21, 2019

PLACE: Chatfield United Methodist Church,

TIME: 12:00 Noon

124 Winona St.

Chatfield, MN

COME JOIN THE FUN!

Refreshments, barbecues, buns, beverages, and tableware will be provided for you.

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

Following the lunch, a discussion period will address any questions or comments you may have about bluebirding. Share your story!

There will be **Awards** and **Door Prizes**.

Questions or to RSVP

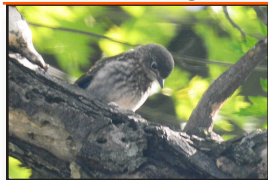
MARY & BILL BAILEY

9400 150th Ave, SE

Chatfield, MN 55923-2917

OR PHONE: MARY & BILL BAILEY (507) 867-9118

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE! BRING ANYONE INTERESTED IN HELPING BLUEBIRDS.



*Photos by
Doris
Glander*

Tidbits

• We now have an online Donation page on our BBRP website. It is quick, easy and you can use a credit card or PayPal.

• **Wanted:** If you know a group that would be interested in a talk about bluebirds contact the BBRP board. We can provide speakers to talk to groups to about how people can help bluebirds.

• If you want your newsletter sent out by email instead of mail go to BBRP.org online and sign up.



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 | Baxter 218-829-5297 | Pete Meyer Mound 952-472-7449 | LE SUEUR Bruce Smisek Montgomery 507-364-8966 | RAMSEY George Brown Ramsey 651-245-2435 | WABASHA Carol & Dale Nibbe Lake City 651-345-2410 |
| ANOKA Jeanne Wilkinson Anoka 763-229-9972 | DAKOTA David Schmidt Inver Grove Heights 651-457-9195 | HOUSTON Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573 | Ben Bartusek New Prague 952-758-3398 | RICE Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433 | WADENA Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401 |
| BELTRAMI Jim Humeniuk Bemidji 218-766-1390 | Marlys Shirley Farmington 952-469-3510 | HUBBARD Ron Jensen Park Rapids 218-732-4205 | LYON (S. Lyon) Paul Rasmussen Russell 507-823-4731 | Fern & Ken Vesledahl Nerstrand 507-645-8610 | WASECA Wally Swanson Waterville 507-362-8760 |
| BENTON Bob & Sandy Rajkowski Rice 320-393-2909 | FILLMORE Mary Bailey Chatfield 507-867-9918 | ISANTI Vacant | Rita & Dennis Engels Ghent 507-428-3554 | SCOTT Marilyn Suter Farmington 651-460-4236 | WASHINGTON George Brown Ramsey 651-245-2435 |
| BROWN Vacant | Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433 | ITASCA Rick Blake Grand Rapids 218-327-3303 | MILLE LACS Vacant | SHERBURNE Jan Wallin Zimmerman 763-442-4390 | David Schmidt (W. Washington) Inver Grove Heights 651-457-9195 |
| CARLTON Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953 | Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573 | KANABEC Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953 | MORRISON Vacant | ST. LOUIS (N. ST. LOUIS) Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047 | WINONA Brianna Frisch Minnieska 507-459-4829 |
| CASS Vacant | GOODHUE Steve Malecha Cannon Falls 507-581-4383 | KANDIYOHI Ronald A. Erpelding Willmar 320-235-0788 | OLMSTED Mary Bailey Chatfield 507-867-9118 | STEARNS Vacant | WRIGHT Mary A Swenson Monticello 763-516-1074 |
| CHISAGO Robert Walz North Branch 651-307-4679 | HENNEPIN John Hauser Bloomington 952-831-8132 | LAKE Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047 | PENNINGTON Dave & Diane Peterson Thief River Falls 218-681-7614 | SWIFT Bill Hoberg Benson 320-843-3988 | |
| CROW WING Mary Kalinowski | Bob Hursh Edina 952-334-5084 | | POPE Barb Mulvaney Glenwood 320-278-3763 | | |

BBRP Board Members

Brianna Frisch (Membership)
Minnieska, MN 55910
507-459-4829
bri_kruse@hotmail.com

Karah Bausch Olson
Minneapolis, MN
612-819-0944
Karah.Bausch@target.com

Bruce Smisek
Montgomery, MN
952-292-9165
sodcompany705@gmail.com

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

David Schmidt
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077
651-457-9195
schmidt_dw@yahoo.com

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

Jeanie Mortenson
(IExpo Chair)
Faribault, MN
507-332-7003
jeanieandcarl@hotmail.com

Michael Sandberg
Faribault, MN
507-210-1519
pa.sandberg3409@gmail.com

Wally Swanson (Annual Report)
Waterville, MN
507-380-4106
swansonw@frontiernet.net

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

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

Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota



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Faribault, MN 55021

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Editor BB News: Virginia Windschitl,
edbbnews@outlook.com

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Upcoming Events

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



December 1, 2019
Trail Reports for the 2019 Nesting Season Due



Photo by Ardy Murphy

April 18, 2020 – Saturday
Bluebird Expo
Cannon Falls, MN

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"To encourage, inspire, educate and
assist individuals and organizations to
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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.