



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"

Bluebird Recovery Program Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Bluebird News



Volume 23 Issue 2

March, 2012

Are You Ready for a New Nesting Season? by Mary Bailey

I know, we all miss them and simply can hardly wait until they return to give us our necessary dose of blue! However, there are things we can do until those beloved bluebirds return that will help them when they arrive and keep us focused on that anticipated day when that flash of blue catches our eye or that sweet song resonates softly and stops us in our tracks.

One important thing about being bluebird monitors after we have examined our notebooks for our yearly reports is to look at each site with a yield-conscious, critical eye. First, each box should be assessed for condition. Many boxes on my trail came down this year because they were just no good anymore. Those lovely cedar boxes custom made about seven years ago are not in the condition I had hoped they would stay. Most importantly, we now have that wonderful PVC style of box that is so much easier to check, lasts longer and is better overall for the bluebirds.

The next aspect to consider is placement. I think we are all reluctant to take down a nestbox; but if it has not had a bluebird nest in two years, it is best to do so and find more productive habitat for it. I had one pair of boxes that I was sure was in the perfect spot but never got even a blade of grass. I moved them about twenty feet further out into the open area and have had successful nestings every season since. Evidently the bluebirds didn't think like I originally did!

I have also had very good luck with placing boxes on the county road on property belonging to other people, actually extending my trail to neighboring property. I have had only positive experiences doing this, as the neighbors are delighted to see the bluebirds, and it adds to the bluebird population. Now, during the

nesting season, I can guarantee a bluebird sighting to anyone who drives down our stretch of that road. When I am checking the boxes, I am often stopped by people just curious about what I am doing; and I have pleasant conversations with them, an added bonus. The main reason I

have had to do this is because my land is changing. It has been nineteen years in my hands, and there has been the natural succession take place with young walnuts moving into open areas. This, of course, is a gradual thing; and I have had to step back and really take a practical look, asking myself if I want to continue checking unproductive boxes or battling wrens. I have, instead, spent my time launching other trails in our community with the help of some very enthusiastic monitors and the permission of the local golf course board and the city council. Maybe we could all in our travels look for other places for boxes or trails and think about expanding that way. I have never known a bluebirder who has been turned down when approaching a landowner for permission to place boxes. They are usually excited about the possibility of having bluebirds in their yards. It is fun to see which site gets the first nest, eggs, hatchlings, and fledglings – which sites get double nestings.

See, I have you all excited already, don't I. But they aren't here yet. In the meantime, put water in your heated birdbaths, fill your feeders for those cardinals and sweet chickadees, put suet cakes out for the woodpeckers and nuthatches, and sit inside watching them as you review your data and plan your trail revisions. You could also give your county coordinator a call just to keep in touch. We love to hear from our bluebirders.

POINTS OF INTEREST

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UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING EXPO
SATURDAY, APRIL 14TH
MC for the day Mary Bailey
If you want an extra great
start to the
Bluebird Nesting Season
certainly attend the Expo.
Look for details inside.
We'll see you there!



Photo by Ken Anderson



2012 ANNUAL BLUEBIRD EXPO



Tom Comfort

*"Key Factors to selecting
Bluebird Nest Box Locations"*
(In 2011, Tom fledged 168 Bluebirds
from 30 locations)



Al Batt

Southern MN Comedian
Al does thoughtful, clean and humorous
talks that will allow those in the audience to
laugh and learn



Raptor Center

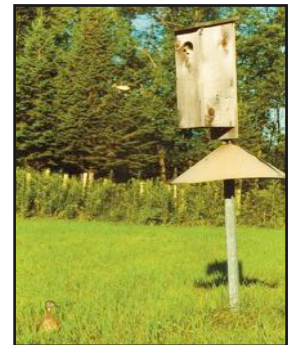
Live Birds
(Bald Eagle, Owls, & Hawks)

SATURDAY, APRIL 14
BYRON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Registration: 8:00 am - 9:00 am
Program: 9:00 am - 4:30 pm



Kelly Applegate
"Attracting Purple Martins"



Roger Strand
"Wood Duck Nest Box
Management in Minnesota".

OTHER SPEAKERS:

Mike Jeresek - "Buffalo Gnat control to save Baby Bluebirds"
Keith Radel - "Increasing Fledging Rates and Keeping Bluebirds Safe"



SALES – DEMONSTRATIONS – VIDEOS
EXHIBITS – SILENT AUCTION

WANT TO ATTRACT BLUEBIRDS?
THIS IS THE PLACE TO LEARN HOW!

Bluebird Expo! by JENean Mortenson

Our winter has been so mild and very nice, I can go out and walk my dog Molly and don't have to bundle up like we did last year. But we know we do need the moisture and I am sure we'll be paying for it in the future.

It seems like lots of you are thinking Expo like we are. Right after the January 2012 issue went out I received lots of registrations, maybe that warm weather made this happen. We are getting lots of registrations from far away places, British Columbia, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota, it is nice to see their interest in our Expo. Like I've always said, it's so fun to go to the mailbox and get the registrations, there are so many new friendships that are created each year and it's so nice to see our friends who we connect with over the years.

Our Expo will be held on April 14th in Byron, Minnesota at their Middle School. We have a great list of featured speakers again and it should be a great day. Tom Comfort is a County Coordinator for the Michigan Bluebird Society. His topic will be "Key Factors to Selecting Bluebird Nest Box Locations". Keith Radel will give a presentation on "Increasing Fledging Rates and Keeping Bluebirds Safe". Kelly Applegate will be speaking on Purple Martins, Roger Strand on Wood Ducks and Mike Jerecek on "Buffalo Gnat control to save Baby Bluebirds". Our Al Batt will be making us all laugh with his wonderful stories and humor. The Raptor Center of Minnesota will be providing us with a wonderful program with their beautiful birds. These birds have been injured either by being shot or hit by a car and were taken to the Raptor Center for rehabilitation. Because of the severity of their injuries they can not be released into the wild, so now are part of the Centers' education program.

There will be a majestic bald eagle, hawk, owl and falcon, and it is a program that is enjoyed by all and you will be so inspired. Also, the Raptor Center recycles used printer ink cartridges for income to help with their expenses, so if you have any please bring them that day. We'll have a box set up by the registration table for you to drop them into.

We will be having our silent auction and raffle, money raised from that goes towards our education programs. If you have something you would want to donate for this, it would be very much appreciated. On the registration form there is a line that indicates if you want to donate. If you are donating please fill that out and describe the item so I can have the bidding tickets all filled out with the information and your name on it. I want to give credit when people donate, but last year there were a couple of people who I forgot to mention when the newsletter came out after the Expo. They are Marilyn Suter and Joel and Barb Mielke and I am sorry I didn't recognize you guys. When donations of money are sent, we can then purchase special items from Wild Wings. If you were at the Expo last year there was a beautiful framed picture signed and numbered with the authenticity document called "Holly Hocks and Bluebirds" by artist Susan Bourdet. We are offering another one like that on the raffle this year, also a regulator clock modeled after nostalgic advertising clocks and it has a design of a bluebird inset and is ebony in color by artist Susan Bourdet on the raffle also.



Our sales table also has some really neat items. There are clothes, cards, beautiful flags, handmade tote bags, something for everyone.

We will be having our Caterer Marlene Gustafson and her crew doing the wonderful hot lunch for us and hopefully she'll do that darling cake decorated with a bluebird nest and eggs. There will be coffee breaks in the morning and afternoon and if you would like to donate cookies for this, it will be appreciated.

There are twenty non-smoking rooms reserved until March 13th at the

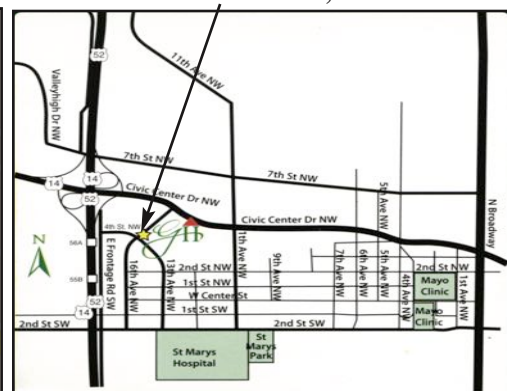
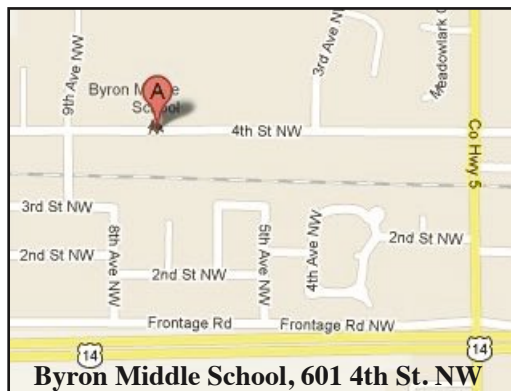


GuestHouse Inn Rochester located at 435 16th Avenue NW, Rochester (507)288-9090, toll free 877-374-9090. BBRP has been given a reduced price of \$64.99 (\$72.38 including tax) per night with 1-4 per room. Some rooms have one king size bed and the other have two queen size beds. When making your reservations mention you are with Bluebird Recovery Program to get that special price.

Come and enjoy the day, meet new people and connect with old friends, it is truly a fun day. For anyone wanting to email me my new email address is jmmclm@localnet.com.

Thank you for all the great work you do for the Bluebirds.

JENean Mortenson Expo Co/Chair



GuestHouse Inn Rochester
435 16th Avenue NW, Rochester

"MORE BLUEBIRD PICTURES" by Ken Anderson

The January Bluebird news featured Bluebird pictures on page 5. They were actually taken by Ken Anderson and submitted by Bruce & Barb Mulvaney. We apologize for that mistake.



BLUEBIRD TRAIL "TOOL KIT" by Marlys Shirley - Dakota County Coordinator, BBRP Committee Secretary

Have you been out on your trail, found a situation which needed something you did NOT have along, and then been frustrated with an "if only" thought wishing you had the necessary item when needed? Here are some suggested items you can carry along with you in a plastic tote box with handle on the lid OR a readily available tool kit of appropriate size for your bluebird trail needs:

- 1) Tote or tool box with carry handle.
- 2) Black permanent marker (to number or label nest boxes)
- 3) Screwdrivers (Phillip's head and flat blade heads)
- 4) Plastic container with extra conduit connectors, pole screws, and nails for door closures.
- 5) Steel wool and paste wax (to smooth and wax poles)
- 6) Vaseline (to deter wasps if a wasp nest is removed)
- 7) Mechanic's Mirror (to check eggs/chicks in higher nest box)
- 8) 2 inch paint brush (nest cleaning)
- 9) 3 inch plastic scrapper (has flat base and useful to lift a nest or clean out box)
- 10) 3M respirator (breathing protection if cleaning mouse infested box)
- 11) Spray bottle with disinfectant (box cleaning)
- 12) Rags (10 inch x 10 inch size handy to wipe out box when cleaning)
- 13) Vanilla – small container and eyedropper (protection of chicks from gnats if necessary. One drop on each chick, in each corner of nest and wiped around entrance hole.)

Of course, when setting up boxes and poles, you need a small sledge hammer to pound rebar into the ground to set up poles or move nest boxes to a new location. These items are basics for the weekly checking of nesting boxes on your trail. You can add other items as you see fit, such as hand warmers that can be activated and placed under nests in an unusually cold or damp spell of weather to save eggs or chicks.

A clean and complete bluebird tote box adds convenience and saves time on your weekly round as you visit your jewels of blue. May you experience much joy and success on YOUR trail!

BBRP Educational Booth by Carrol Johnson



The Bluebird Recovery Program once again had a booth at the Northern Green Expo held at the Minneapolis Convention Center on January 4-6, 2012. This is the 6th year that BBRP has participated in the Expo. This is an excellent event for BBRP to meet and educate the public about the proper way of mounting bluebird nest boxes, the importance of weekly checking of nest box during the nesting season and the right habitat needed when starting a bluebird trail.



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:

_____ 1 year \$12.00	2 years \$23.00 _____
_____ 5 years \$55.00	Lifetime \$150.00 _____
_____ * Gift Membership * - indicate amount & period of gift _____	



*Bringing back Bluebirds
for Future Generations!*

Member Name _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone(optional) _____

* 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 Sheila Smisek
705 W. Welco Dr. • Montgomery, MN 56069

Bluebirds and Black Flies (Buffalo Gnats) *by Mary Roen*



I have had many unexplained deaths of older Bluebird nestlings in the past several years, so I did some research on black flies to see if they could have been the cause of the deaths.

Bluebirds can be killed by large numbers of black flies. In most cases, death seems to be the consequence of a toxemia caused by the bites, or the result of anaphylactic shock; although debility resulting from blood loss and suffocation brought about by inhalation of the flies is apparently a contributing cause.



There are about 30 species of black flies, also referred to as gnats or buffalo gnats, which can be a serious problem because of their ability to bite. They use blade-like mouthparts to slash the skin and feed on the blood. Black flies are a problem from spring through summer in nearly all areas in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Eggs are laid directly on the water or on the leaves of aquatic plants and objects in rivers, streams, and other running water. When they hatch, the larvae attach themselves to stones, vegetation, branches, and other objects submerged under the water. Black flies develop in large rivers as well as small streams. It takes 10 days to several weeks for larval black flies to develop under water, depending on water temperature. After about a week as pupae, they emerge as adults. Adults live for about three to six weeks. Most adults can fly about 10 miles from their breeding source, but can also be carried considerably further on air currents. Both males and females feed on nectar for flight energy, but only females bite to take a blood meal. Black flies are most active about two hours after sunrise, and two hours after sunset. Although they are strong fliers, they are less of a nuisance on windy days and in open areas, than on calm days and in sheltered areas.

One monitor recommends applying pure cooking vanilla (not imitation vanilla) to the outside of all boxes containing nestlings, and around all openings (air vents, water drains, entrances, etc.). The black flies are attracted to the carbon dioxide leaving the box from the nestlings' respirations. Vanilla covers this scent. It can be applied by dabbing it on with cotton balls, or by using a small spray bottle. It is also suggested that you tack a cotton ball above the entrance hole and under the roof extension if possible. Spray the cotton ball whenever you treat the box. The cotton retains the vanilla smell longer than the wood box. Applications at least once a week, and twice a week if possible, are recommended. For one monitor, Bluebird baby deaths dropped to 20 in 2010 from the 275 and 175 experienced in 2008 and 2009. Only 5 of the deaths occurred after using the vanilla as a repellent. I checked my records, and in 2010 I lost 25 nestlings, and in 2011 I lost 29, all in June, July and August. All were healthy at one check and dead the next week. I believe the cause was most likely black flies. After losing 29 nestlings in 2011, I did apply vanilla on Q-tips and slid them in under the nests of surviving Bluebirds nestlings, and had no further losses.

Now that I have gotten all this information about treating nest boxes to deter black flies from biting and killing Bluebird nestlings, I need to plan what I will do in 2012. I have decided to use vanilla treatments on all nest boxes with Bluebird nestlings. I have almost all Gilwood nest boxes, so I only have to treat one opening. I will put vanilla in a spray bottle, plug the entrance hole, and spray the front of the nest box. I will also soak a cotton ball in vanilla, and attach it to the underside of the roof of the nest boxes close to the entrance hole with a thumbtack. Another Bluebirder used an eyedropper to put a drop of vanilla on each nestling. I will try this, too.

The next decision is when to start the treatments. The earliest deaths in my nest boxes were June 2 and the latest August 13. Even though the lifespan of the flies is usually 2-3 weeks, there can be multiple generations of many species every summer. I will start the treatments on nest boxes with nestlings, on June 1, and continue through the middle of August. It is my hope to protect all my Bluebird nestlings from the black flies/buffalo gnats, and have no fatalities in 2012.

Mary Roen, River Falls, WI

Make your own vanilla

2 Cups vodka

6 Vanilla Beans

Cut the vanilla beans down the center to the last inch of the bean

Pour the vodka into a quart mason jar.

Put the cut beans in the vodka and push them down until they are completely covered and let it sit for 8 weeks.

The darker it gets, the stronger it is.

You can buy vanilla beans on ebay.

Alert!!!! We have learned that the Raptor Center has received 5 injured owls due to being tangled in Christmas lights still out on trees. Owls are very active this time of year because of nesting.



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 Carol Johnson or Keith Radel for more information.

"Raising our Bluebirds for Future Generations"

<u>AITKIN</u> Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953 (N. AITKIN) Joan & Tom Nelson Hill City 612-414-0152 <u>ANOKA</u> Jeanne Wilkinson Anoka 763-427-2779	Darrell Stave Baxter 218-829-6939 <u>DAKOTA</u> Marlys Shirley Farmington 952-469-3510 <u>DOUGLAS</u> Elizabeth Murray Alexandria 507-530-2293 <u>FILLMORE</u> Mary Bailey Chatfield 507-867-9118 Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433 Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573	<u>ITASCA</u> Noreene Vidal Wirt 218-659-2741 Rick Blake Grand Rapids 218-327-3303 (S. ITASCA) Joan & Tom Nelson Hill City 612-414-0152 <u>KANABEC</u> Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953 <u>KANDIYOHI</u> Ronald A. Erpelding Willmar 320-235-0788	<u>MILLE LACS</u> Darlene Bemis Milaca 320-938-3838 Jeremy Nyquist Isle 320-676-3121 <u>MORRISON</u> Dave & Carol Fiedler Buffalo 763-682-4221 <u>OLMSTED</u> Mary Bailey Chatfield 507-867-9118 Lisa Storey Rochester 507-529-8082 <u>PENNINGTON</u> Dave & Diane Peterson Thief River Falls 218-681-7614 Arlene Thune Thief River Falls 218-681-1740	<u>SCOTT</u> Marilyn Suter Farmington 651-4604236 Evelyn Graber Prior Lake 952-440-7073 <u>SHERBURNE</u> Wade Lovelette Elk River 763-441-2380 Jan Wallin Zimmerman 763-856-2950 <u>SIBLEY</u> Harold Caster Belle Plaine 952-873-6366 <u>ST. LOUIS</u> (N. ST. LOUIS) Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047 Dick Forsline Bloomington 952-835-6769 <u>STEARNS</u> Bernard Meyer St. Cloud 320-252-4791 <u>STEELE</u> John Beal Faribault 507-451-2697 Keith Radel Faribault 507-334-2491 <u>SWIFT</u> Bill Hoberg Benson 320-843-3988 <u>TODD</u> Elizabeth Murray Alexandria 507-530-2293	<u>WABASHA</u> Carol & Dale Nibbe Lake City 651-345-2410 <u>WADENA</u> Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401 Ester Vasey Sebeka 218-837-5259 <u>WASECA</u> Wally Swanson Waterville 507-362-8760 <u>WASHINGTON</u> Paul Diegnau Maplewood 651-766-4174 <u>WINONA</u> Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573 Bill Nepper Winona 507-454-3263 <u>WRIGHT</u> Dorene Scriven Minneapolis 612-922-4586 Mary Swenson Monticello 763-878-2702
<u>BELTRAMI</u> Jim Humeniuk Bemidji 218-766-1390 <u>BENTON</u> Gene & Betty Punsack Foley 320-963-6595 Bob & Sandy Rajkowski Rice 320-393-2909 <u>BROWN</u> Dominic Sellner Sleepy Eye 507-375-8737 <u>CARLTON</u> Steve Gilbertson Aitkin 218-927-1953 <u>CARVER</u> Jeff Smith Excelsior 952-474-7776 <u>CASS</u> Al & Alice Lauer St. Cloud 320-240-9431 Ron Craven Pine River 218-587-5074 <u>CROW WING</u> Mary Kalinoski Baxter 218-829-7552	<u>GOODHUE</u> Steve Malecha Cannon Falls 507-298-0384 <u>HENNEPIN</u> John Hauser Bloomington 952-831-8132 Bob Hursh Edina 952-922-6527 Pete Meyer Mound 952-472-7449 <u>HOUSTON</u> Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573 <u>HUBBARD</u> Ron Jensen Park Rapids 218-732-4205 <u>ISANTI</u> Russ Krause Maple Grove 763-420-4428	<u>LAKE</u> Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047 <u>LE SUEUR</u> Bruce Smisek Montgomery 507-364-8966 Ben Bartusek New Prague 952-758-3398 <u>LYON</u> (S. Lyon) Paul Rasmussen Russell 507-823-4731 Rita & Dennis Engels Ghent 507-428-3554 <u>MARSHALL</u> Linda & Larry Johnson Warren 218-745-6622 <u>MCLEOD</u> Kevin Schram Plato 320-238-2467	<u>POPE</u> Bruce & Barb Mulvaney Glenwood 320-278-3763 <u>RAMSEY</u> Ken Yeager Arden Hills 651-484-5496 <u>RICE</u> Carrol Johnson Northfield 507-664-9433 Keith Radel Faribault 507-334-2491 <u>ROCK</u> Roger & Ruth Mary Jackson Hills 507-962-3303	<u>ST. LOUIS</u> (N. ST. LOUIS) Beth Urban Ely 218-365-5047 Dick Forsline Bloomington 952-835-6769 <u>STEARNS</u> Bernard Meyer St. Cloud 320-252-4791 <u>STEELE</u> John Beal Faribault 507-451-2697 Keith Radel Faribault 507-334-2491 <u>SWIFT</u> Bill Hoberg Benson 320-843-3988 <u>TODD</u> Elizabeth Murray Alexandria 507-530-2293	<u>WABASHA</u> Carol & Dale Nibbe Lake City 651-345-2410 <u>WADENA</u> Paul Sailer Wadena 218-631-4401 Ester Vasey Sebeka 218-837-5259 <u>WASECA</u> Wally Swanson Waterville 507-362-8760 <u>WASHINGTON</u> Paul Diegnau Maplewood 651-766-4174 <u>WINONA</u> Mike Jeresek Rushford 507-864-2573 Bill Nepper Winona 507-454-3263 <u>WRIGHT</u> Dorene Scriven Minneapolis 612-922-4586 Mary Swenson Monticello 763-878-2702



**Bluebird Recovery Program
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis**



**P.O. Box 984
Faribault, MN 55021**

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organization. Members contribute an annual
tax-deductible donation of \$12.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Save This Date
Sat. April 14th, 2012
State Wide Bluebird Expo
Byron Middle School

Upcoming Bluebird Events 2012

Thursday, March 22nd - 25th, - Great Plains Sandhill Crane & Bluebird Festival. For more information, visit their website at: www.bbne.org, or e-mail info@bbne.org, or write to Bluebirds Across Nebraska, P.O. Box 67157, Lincoln, NE 68506-7157

Thursday, March 29th, 2012 @ 7 p.m. - Bluebird Informational Meeting and Presentation, History Center of Olmsted County. 1195 W. Circle Drive, Rochester, MN 55902. For information contact Janet Timmerman Program Coordinator 507-282-9447 ext 117.

Saturday, April 14th - Annual BBRP Expo - Minnesota's Bluebird Event of the Year!
Byron Middle School, 601 4th St. NW, Byron, MN. 55920

Saturday, April 21st, 2012 @ 1 p.m. - Bluebird Informational Meeting - Lake Carlos State Park, 2601-County road 38 NE, Carlos MN. Questions Contact: Todd County Coordinator Elizabeth Murray, 320-852-7200.

Saturday, May 19th, 2012 - @ 9 - 3 p.m. - Bluebird Presentation and Booth, - Earth, Wings and Water Days, Camp Courage 8046 83rd Street NW, Maple Lake, MN 55358. For more information contact: Paul Schutte @ 612-968-3934.

BBRP MEMBERS

Please check your address label on this newsletter for your expiration date of membership.

The four digits above your name indicate the month and year your membership will expire. (Example: 03 12 means this membership will expire March of 2012). Members who have a lifetime membership the year will read 99. If your membership is nearing expiration in 2012 (or has already expired) please renew now. Remember your membership is tax-deductible and it helps BBRP with their educational programs.

Thank you to everyone who wrote articles, provided photographs or helped with the mailing of this publication of the Bluebird News.

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."



Photo by Ken Anderson