



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"

# Bluebird News



Volume 31 Issue 4

Fall, 2021

## Bluebird BBRP Memories – Marlys Shirley

[Editor's note: Marlys and Glen Shirley have retired from the BBRP Board as of the last meeting so I asked Marlys to share some memories of her time as Secretary and Dakota County Coordinator. I visited with them at their house surrounded by woods overlooking Chub Lake that they built in 1996 on land that has been in the Shirley family for over 100 years, a perfect place to watch nature from their dining room, screen porch, deck, and living room. Marlys is a very talented artist and her love of birds and nature shows in her paintings.]

My first recollection of noticing bluebirds was 40 years ago when a bluebird family nested in an old pine tree in our rural front yard! That was a wonderful surprise.

We got interested, purchased a Peterson box and installed it on our light pole. No success, but growing interest! We had always enjoyed feeding the wild birds, and husband Glen thinks it was Steve at the Wild Bird Store that

told him about a Bluebird Expo. We went to it that spring up at Camp Ripley and found folks that were really active promoting blu-

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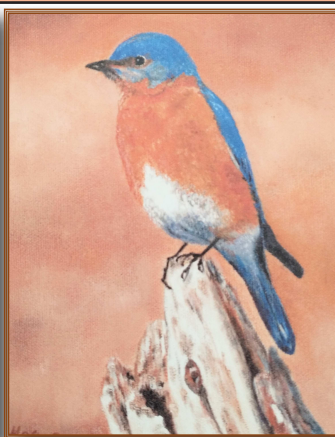
Minneapolis. We attended a meeting or two of this pioneer group and the rest is history! It was a time of transition, as Dorene was, after many years of leadership, turning the reins over to new leadership. My husband, Glen, and I became a part of that BBRP Board which then met at Ritter Park in Lakeville, and I was its new secretary. Lance Krog's fine chairmanship ended unexpectedly when he passed of cancer. The board members were now mostly from the Faribault and Northfield area, so the meeting places became Northfield Community Bank, Little Prairie Church, and then Bethel Church in Northfield. There ends up being a lot of history in the pages of the secretarial minutes I took during the fifteen years I served as secretary of

this great group of folks who have dedicated so much time and effort into guiding the mission of bringing back the bluebirds. The success it has had through all the past

years since the late 70s is due to those early pioneers and all who followed on the BBRP Board.



Goldfinch painting by Marlys Shirley



Bluebird painting by Marlys Shirley



View from the Shirley's home on Chub Lake

bird support and full of helpful information! Next came an invitation from Keith Radel to join a car pool to the BBRP Board meeting at the home of Dorene Scriven in

Continued on page 2

## Bluebird BBRP Memories (continued)

I signed on as a Dakota County Coordinator and had many rich experiences giving workshops for garden clubs, Girl Scouts, women's clubs, and answering calls from folks wanting bluebird info, help in setting up their bluebird nesting boxes, finding out where they could obtain boxes, or help with various problems they were encountering in their yards or on their trails.

The annual Bluebird Expo was always an exciting day, setting up the night before, having supper out with the board and those who assisted. It was always fun assisting with activities such as the raffle, silent auction, visiting all the bluebird booths, listening to speakers, and helping with the morning and afternoon coffee and cookie times where I became known as the "cookie lady" along with my assistants such as Winnie Johnson!

I felt so privileged to receive the Dick Peterson Award and the Bluebirder of the Year Award during my years of service. The plaques received remain a life treasure that bring back so many good memories of good friends and good times.

Central to all, however, remains the joy of preparing my bluebird trail with my trusty helpful husband in spring and the anticipation of seeing the jewels of blue returning for a new season. Yes, there are disappointments in the weekly checking of the progress on the trail, but the good surprises and successes experienced far outweigh them at the end of the season when the final tally is sent in to add to the final count of what all our bluebirders have accomplished in helping these lovely bluebird families be successful throughout our state. It has been a joy to be part of this BBRP Board's extraordinary teamwork!

## BBRP Public Lands Bluebird Nestbox Program

The Bluebird Recovery Program of MN to further its mission of "Education and Outreach" is 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). All nest boxes given out will be Gilbertson – PVC boxes.

**Applications will be accepted until February 1st of 2022** with nest boxes being distributed in March to those facilities chosen by the BBRP Nest Box Program application review committee. Application forms are available on the BBRP.org website.

The applicant is required to ensure trail monitoring is done throughout the nesting season and year-end trail reporting is submitted to BBRP.org annually. If this is not done nest boxes will be reclaimed by BBRP.

## *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

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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**



## Renewed Efforts Needed

By Gene Kroupa

Preliminary 2021 numbers are in and they aren't pretty. Overall, Eastern Bluebird fledglings in Wisconsin are down 45% compared with 2020 figures. Likewise, Minnesota monitors reported a statewide decline of 47% this year.

Lack of breeding pairs was the main culprit. Loss of overwintering bluebirds due to severe weather in the South left some nest boxes empty this spring. But fledging success varied widely by area of both states with some monitors still reporting good results.

According to BRAW president Steve Sample, "It's time for us to double-down on recovery efforts to get those numbers back up in 2022." This means paying extra close attention to management techniques that optimize chances of bluebirds being successful in nesting efforts.

Our friends with the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota offer some suggestions. "My main tip is to control pests, especially black gnats," says Carrol Johnson, of Northfield. He recommends affixing vanilla scent trees, like those for vehicles, in nest boxes.

Jean Olson, of Hinckley, strongly suggests moving unproductive nest boxes or those plagued by wrens and sparrows. "I will be moving

boxes again next spring, especially in park areas where brush is growing up near them," she noted.



Pat Laybourne

Providing adequate spacing between boxes so that there is less competition helps, too.

"Keeping boxes far enough away from each other – at least 100 yards – encourages more use by bluebirds," says Annie Huidekoper, of St. Paul.

Pat Laybourne, of Bloomington, reminds us to

"consistently and intentionally clean out old nests as well as new ones from invasive species." Keep in mind that while sparrows are considered an invasive species, wrens and tree swallows are protected in Wisconsin.

"Be willing to give new boxes a year or two more to attract



Annie Huidekoper



Mike Fulford

"It's a shame to lose eggs or a clutch of chicks to raccoons because we didn't include a deep enough guard to thwart their long-reach."

Along this same vein, make sure nest boxes are 5' to 6' off the ground, facing east and mounted on poles that are not easily accessible or climbable by predators.

As Sample concluded: "We just have to do things better in 2022 to make up for declines in some areas this year. It all starts with regular monitoring of existing, new and relocated nest boxes."

bluebirds," says Mike Fulford, of Little Falls. "Even though new nest boxes aren't used this year, a good location should be given a chance to produce."

And don't forget the predator guards. That's the advice of David Schmidt, of Inver Grove Heights.



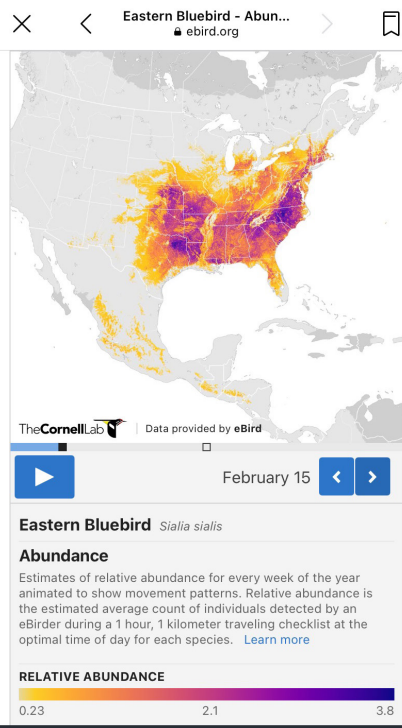
David Schmidt

## Winter Blues

By Pat Ready

So you have read about the low numbers of Eastern Bluebirds that returned to the midwest in spring. I decided to look into some data about where bluebirds go during winter. The best source is ebird, a program of The Cornell Lab. They compiled reports from individual birders they receive daily. The lab then creates animated maps showing long term info over the year. Here I captured the February 15 data showing relative abundance of bluebirds. The darker purple area is where numbers were greater. As you can see the southern states that had the cold and snow during February had the most bluebird concentration. Reports from those areas said people were finding dead bluebirds in nest boxes starved or frozen to death.

The surviving bluebirds that did return and nested probably raised two broods. Recovery has begun!



**New Board Member Introduction, by Nancy Engel**

Bluebird monitoring found me about 7 years ago; it was not something I sought out for myself. At the time, I had been doing some volunteering for the City of Rosemount in the Building department. While I was enjoying my time scanning building plans from decades ago, the volunteer coordinator for the city asked me if I'd like to take on monitoring some bluebird trails in a few city parks because the person who was currently doing so was no longer able to do it. Monitoring bluebird trails? I had no idea what this even meant, but I told her I'd be interested in finding out more before I said yes or no to the idea.

One chilly fall Saturday I met an older gentleman who was the current blue birder for my area at a park. I was there to find out what I'd be doing as a "monitor" and to see how much work I'd have to do. As we trudged through tall grasses, prickly burrs and muddy areas to take a peek at some of the houses he had built and installed, I started to think that maybe this monitoring thing might be a better fit for someone more "outdoorsy" than I. But I didn't want to be rude and leave right away after seeing just one trail. So even though I just met him, I agreed to hop into his truck to drive to see another trail he was monitoring. He had a number of years on me, and he was background-checked by the city, so I figured it was safe to ride with him. I was right that he was a totally sweet gentleman, but I didn't give any consideration to his driving skills before I got into his vehicle. Let's just say that we both almost met our Maker that day as he pulled out onto the highway. Yet another sign that blue birding probably wasn't meant for me?

We made our way to two more trails that were covered with brush, grass and pokey things. We were getting further into suburban nature than I was comfortable with, but I smiled and went along with it. Besides, my new friend was a talker and I enjoyed his stories. And I started to feel my nurturing/caretaking side bubbling through. If I don't take over these trails that this lovely man had spent so much time and energy on, who will? I just couldn't, in good conscience, let all this work go to waste. Besides, according to him, it really wasn't going to be that much work. Oh, did I neglect to mention that he didn't actually monitor the houses so much as cleaned them out twice per year? Piece of cake, I thought. So that's how it started. I did everything wrong! The houses were all in the wrong places. I didn't monitor them. I didn't count eggs, not that it would have made a difference because I couldn't differentiate between eggs anyway. Of course, I could have done basic online research to find out that what I was doing was incorrect, but I was kind of lazy and trusted that my guide knew everything about bluebirds because in addition to being a really good storyteller, he sounded very knowledgeable about a lot of things!

At some point during that first laissez-faire season, I came across the listing of David Schmidt's Intro to Bluebirding class in the Dakota County brochure. Thankfully, I had the good sense to sign up for the class because it made me do a 180 on my entire approach to the "monitoring" I had done thus far. My head was spinning during that class as I was bombarded with all the things I should have been doing to help these poor bluebirds! That fall I got busy and recruited my husband to help me repair broken houses and move them to more appropriate locations. I created some basic monitoring charts and waited for spring for my chance at a "do-over" season of bluebird monitoring. Surely, I'd be wildly successful from now on!

It's been a few years since then and I can say without a moment's hesitation that I have yet to experience a wild amount of success and I still feel like a novice much of the time. Our parks are either heavily wooded, super grassy and meadowy or crowded with sports fields so it's tough to scout out good locations for boxes. But we keep looking. It was almost impossible getting committed volunteers at first to help, but for the first time ever this past season, I had more volunteers than I had boxes! Swallows continue to plague many of our boxes, but we'll keep trying to outsmart them or just learn to live with them.

And I've learned my lesson about touching base with city park staff first before installing new boxes. We did that this year and lo and behold, a pair of bluebirds hatched 5 babies in our box, only to have their home be dislodged and tossed aside by a construction worker. We had no idea the park was slated for new ballfields this year because I didn't bother to check in with the Park supervisor first. Those babies had someone watching over them, thank goodness. One of my volunteers found the box, stayed with the babies, kept an eye on the parents and contacted me so we could relocate the box as soon as possible. Without this volunteer's efforts and the incredible determination of that bluebird couple, those babies would not have made it. I guess I can count that couple as a huge success in what was a rather dismal season this



## New Board Member Introduction, continued

year. I can't wait to see them return next spring.

And now I'm on the Board. I don't feel knowledgeable enough to be here, but I'll do my best to help in whatever ways I can to support the mission. Turns out that despite the fact that bluebirding wasn't on my list of things I ever saw myself doing, the reality is, I enjoy doing my very small part to help these gorgeous birds thrive. Every season I continue to learn and feel a bit more confident about my skills. And now that I've got more volunteers helping, it's exciting to think about how to grow our presence in the area. As for my bluebirding guide from 7 years ago, we're still buddies! When I told him about how I had to move all his boxes and why, he gave me a "What do they know?" kind of scoff, but he got over it. Each season I share what's going on with the bluebirds and every time I see him, he continues to share his "wisdom" about all sorts of topics with me. He's still driving, but he usually stays on his side of the highway.

## 15th Annual SE Minnesota Bluebirders' Picnic, by Mary Bailey

On Saturday, September 18, at noon, 27 people gathered at the home of Bill and Mary Bailey, Olmsted and Fillmore County Coordinator, for the 15th Annual SE Minnesota Bluebirders' Picnic. It was a potluck with Bill and Mary providing the main course, the tableware, the beverages, and the seating. The other bluebirders brought a delicious variety of dishes to share.

There were many door prizes for the guests to choose from. The highlight of these was the two bluebird boxes won separately by Quint and Mary Lohse of rural Chatfield. These boxes were donated by Joe Adelman just before he passed



Quint and Mary Lohse with the two bluebird boxes donated as door prizes by Joe and JoAnn Adelman.



Bluebirders see the eye-level oriole's nest in one of the Bailey's weeping willows near their house.

away. He called Mary Bailey from his hospital bed to make this donation; this is the rare kind of person Joe was. He would have been pleased to know what dedicated bluebirders Quint and Mary are and how greatly they will appreciate those boxes of Joe's. As a sidelight, Quint and Mary had just celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary the day before the picnic.

The perfect weather enhanced the comfortable visiting on the covered porch overlooking one of the ponds at Bailey's. There was even a short hike later to see an oriole's nest at eye level in a nearby weeping willow.

## Joe Adelmann

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Joe Adelmann, who supplied us with many of our nest boxes and who had a booth at our Expo every year to sell bluebird boxes, chickadee boxes and other supplies to our members and other attendees.

Joseph Anthony Adelmann, Jr., age 74, of Owatonna, died on Sunday, October 17, 2021, at the Homestead Hospice House, Owatonna. Joe was the son of Joseph "Pete" and Ruth (Hultgren) Adelmann, Sr., and was born on May 28, 1947, in Minneapolis. He married JoAnn Christian on August 5, 1967, in Mendota Heights. He was active in the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota. Joe and JoAnn monitored a very successful bluebird trail weekly and he loved the chickadees that nested in his yard. He loved spending time with his family. His farming background was evident in the care of his lawn and garden.

He is survived by his wife, JoAnn; four children, Jeffrey (and Heather Venning) Adelmann of Apple Valley, Julie Tufte of Shakopee, Jeremy Adelmann of Prior Lake and Jay Adelmann of Marshall; three grandchildren, and his brother, Rick (and Joyce) Adelmann of Blaine.

We will miss his devotion to his beloved bluebirds and extend our deepest sympathy to his wife JoAnn and their family.

## 2022 BBRP EXPO, Jeanie Mortenson, Expo Chair

Hello to everyone, Happy Holidays. It has been such a very long time since I've done a newsletter. We have lived through a very long tough time with the Covid epidemic and have learned to live in a different way; not being able to be with friends and family was unimaginable.

I wanted to announce the date of our Expo for 2022, it will be on Saturday, April 23rd at Cannon Falls School. Our last Expo was there and it is such a wonderful venue for our needs. We are in the planning stage of it now so by the time the next newsletter comes out it will be full of information.

It will be so good to see everyone again, so many good friendships are made there.

Please mark April 23rd. 2022 on your calendar. Have a great safe Holiday season.

## Tidbits

We have added several new board members and several have retired. Glen and Marlys Shirley have retired from the board. Jeanne Mortenson is also leaving the board but is still heading up the Expo planning committee for the 2022 Expo. We thank you for all the work you have done on the board and wish you all the best. We welcome the new members on the board. Nancy Engel introduces herself in this newsletter and we will introduce Amy Weed and Joni Welda in upcoming issues.

Articles "Renewed Efforts Needed" and "Winter Blues" were written for the Bluebird Restoration Association Of Wisconsin (BRAW) newsletter and shared with us.

In regard to the article on "Trail Supplies" we ran in the last newsletter, you can add this to the toolbox for monitoring the Bluebird trails suggested by Joni Welda, Houston County:

"I always carry a bug head net in my tote--they come in a little bag--easy to find--easy to use and a MUST during the summer. They only cost a few dollars on Amazon (and often come in pairs!)"

**Reporting Is Important** You still have time to report your results online at <https://bbrrp.org/report-forms/> or print out a form and mail it to the address below. 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.

Reporting Mail Address: Wally Swanson, 128 South Buchanan, Waterville, MN 56096 Questions call Wally @ 507-362-8760. Email: [swansonw@frontiernet.net](mailto:swansonw@frontiernet.net)

## Donations

Our sincere thanks to the following for their generous donations:

***Donations in memory for Paul Veiter and Ann Vetter Seidenkranz, children of Mary Ellen Vetter were given by the following:***

Jim and Judy Arnold

Jerry and Donna Bahls

John and Lori Blomberg

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Scott Leonard

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Dennis and Susan Polzin

Melissa Sonneberg

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***Joe Adelmann memorials:***

Shankland Family Trust (signed by JoAnn Shanklk and)

Gregory & Teresa Barlow

Carrol Johnson

**General Donations:**

NABS

Minneapolis Audubon Society (Speaker honorarium)

## New Members:

Cliff Taylor, Nerstrand MN

Medeleine Linc

John Martin, Rochester MN

Lisa Lundberg, Duluth MN

June Peterson (Lifetime Member)

Barb Bolan, Northfield MN

Doug Adamek, Edina MN



## 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](mailto:mnbbluebirder@hotmail.com) for more information.

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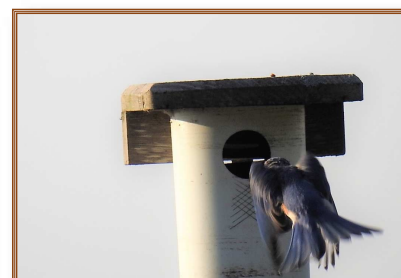


Photo by Doris Glander



## Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota



*"Raising back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"*

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Farmington, MN 55024

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Editor BB News: Virginia Windschitl,

[edbbnews@outlook.com](mailto:edbbnews@outlook.com)

Photo by Doris Glander

### Upcoming Events

**Wishing you a very Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year!**

**December 31, 2021 -**  
**Final deadline for Trail Reports for the 2021**  
**Nesting Season**

**April 23, 2022**  
**Bluebird Expo**  
**Cannon Falls, MN**



Photos by Doris Glander



*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."*

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