



Bluebird News



"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"

Volume 33 Issue 2

Spring 2023

2023 Bluebird Expo

The BBRP 2023 Bluebird Expo was Saturday, April 22, at Little Falls High School. The high school was a great location with plenty of close-up parking, a large auditorium close to the lunch area, and a very helpful staff.

The attendance was somewhat less than last year. Some of that might have been because of the weather with snow the day before, some because of Earth Day conflicts, and some because of the more northern location. That being said, we did have a couple who got up early in the morning and drove up from Lake City to Little Falls that day. Another couple came down from Bemidji in the snow to help Friday afternoon. It was also good that we could reach a new audience in a different part of the state. We had 12 walk-in registrations.

Along with an information booth about bluebirds and nest-boxes, there were several other information tables for Minnesota Master Naturalists, the Loon Center, and a Master Naturalist project

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to put up laminated information posters about bluebirds in state parks.

We had some informative guest speakers on a variety of topics. After a welcome by Mike Fulford, Morrison County Coordinator, the program started with Natasha

Bartolotta, the Communications and Outreach Coordinator for the National Loon Center in Crosslake MN. The center is fundraising to build a permanent 15,000 square foot home and is currently located in a store front in Crosslake called "The Nest" at 14303 Gould Street. They also have a floating classroom, the StewardShip, that "provides a fun and informative tour of Cross Lake that includes respectful (and exhilarating) observation of loons as well as lessons about the actions we can take to conserve loons and freshwater ecosystems."

Before the coffee break Wally Swanson announced the Bluebird of the Year, Ron Guck from Hastings MN, who was not in attendance so the board will get his award plaque to him at a later date.

Next up was Mike North, a 25-year employee of the Minnesota DNR and master bird-bander, who has been partnering in research



Presenter John Latimer



Food Line



County Coordinator Meeting

2023 Bluebird Expo, cont.



Registration Table



Silent Auction



Master Naturalist Information Table



Natasha Barlotta from National Loon Center



Board member Carrol Johnson visiting with Jim Hume-niuk, Beltrami County Coordinator and his wife Jean from Bemidji.

projects with Bemidji State University, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Central Lakes College, the Purple Martin Working Group, the University of Manitoba, and Deep Portage Conservation Reserve. He presented information about what has been learned about various cavity nesters that have been banded or tracked with newer technology. One tracked purple martin did not follow the usual migration route across the Caribbean but veered left over Mexico. What happened that week? A hurricane.

The catered lunch was baked chicken or vegetarian lasagna, mashed potatoes, coleslaw, corn, and rolls. The chicken was fall-off-the-bone well done and delicious. The leftovers did not go to waste either. Several Franciscan nuns helped with registration and when we found that there was lots of chicken left, they were able to connect us with a local non-profit that could distribute all the leftovers.

After lunch David Schmidt, the BBRP Board Chair presided at a short Annual Membership Meeting, presenting a treasurer's report and highlighting what BBRP has been involved with during the past year.

Nancy Klinger, BBRP member and Belwin Conservancy volunteer presented "Tips for Beginning Bluebirders & Identifying Birds on the Trail and in Your Own Backyard" and board member Karah Bausch Olsen helped by playing recordings of the

bird calls from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website while Nancy showed photos of each bird.

Concurrently there was a meeting of all the county coordinators who were in attendance with State Coordinator Carrol Johnson and Board Chair David Schmidt.

The next speaker was John Lattimer who had an entertaining slideshow about the various signs of spring in Minnesota as the season progresses. The expertise he developed observing nature as he delivered mail in northern Minnesota turned him into one of Minnesota's leading phenologists and host of a popular weekly radio show on KAXE Radio.

After a break where people could visit and collect their silent auction purchases there was a final gathering in the auditorium for a "Bluebird Potpourri" by a panel of BBRP board members and county coordinators with a few miscellaneous facts, and a time for questions and comments.

Our board is starting to gather information on possible locations for the 2024 Expo. We would like to have it south of the Twin Cities and west of Interstate 35, and possibly the Mankato area or farther west. If you have any suggestions of possible host sites let us know at info@bbrp.org.

Silent Auction Items

Thank You to all who donated items & money for the BBRP Silent Auction:
Nancy Engel, Mike Jeresek, VT Mangan, Sue Munger, Jim Humenuick, All Seasons Wild Bird Store (Eagan), Diane Glanders, Mary Kalinowski, Pam Sundsmo, Wally Swanson, Marlys Shirley, Peter Meyer, Barb and Gary Drentlaw, Minnesota Zoo Foundation, Natalie and Stanley Adler, Donald Sysyn, Patrick Lynch, Geri and Neal Roth,

Also thanks to Sharon Lein, Master Naturalist, who helped Joni Welda with the Silent Auction.

Public Lands Nest Box Program – 2022– 23

Applications were accepted until February 1st with nest boxes being distributed in March to those facilities chosen by the BBRP Nest Box Program application review committee.

The following organizations were given nest boxes in this year's program

- 9 new boxes and poles to Afton State Park
- 6 used boxes and poles to the Minnesota Zoo
- 14 new boxes to the Minnesota Zoo
- 9 new boxes and poles to Chanhassen Parks
- 4 new boxes and 2 poles to Brown Creek trail – Dellwood
- 10 new boxes and poles to St. Croix State Park
- 52 total boxes given away**

Florida Bluebirds

Got this message from Bob Hursh, one of the Hennepin County Coordinators

I took the attached pics in my sister's backyard [Mt. Dora, Florida] on March 5, 2023. I put up the Gilwood nest box last March. Chickadees used the box in 2022, and bluebirds this year. The birds don't look quite the same as the ones that migrate to Minnesota. I've read that central Florida has a subspecies named *Sialia Sialis Grata*. The coloring of the male seemed to be a darker blue. These eggs hatched and the young have fledged.

I also put up a nest box at a friend's house in The Villages, FL. Bluebirds nested in it last year.



Bird Banding

A Federal Bird Banding and Marking Permit is required by the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL) whenever someone wants to place a bird band or any type of marker on a wild bird protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or on a Federally-protected bird that will be released into the wild.

Expert licensed bird banders set up large nets. These fine and soft “mist nets” mostly capture small songbirds. They catch the birds without harming them, and the banding team checks the net almost continuously to remove birds and bring them to a banding station.

Mist nets are made of fine, black nylon or polyester mesh netting and are usually 12 feet long and about 8-10 feet high when opened. A mist net is stretched between 2 poles, and when placed in the shade amongst vegetation, the net becomes nearly invisible to birds (and often to humans!). Then the bird species are identified, measured, their sex is determined, and a small metal band is placed around the leg, before it is released. A number on the band allows banders and researchers anywhere in North America who may recapture the bird to learn about its history.

History

One of the first scientific tools to track migratory animals involved a metal band fitted around the leg of a bird. This method has become known as banding (or ringing) and was first used in 1890 by the Danish biologist Hans Christian C. Mortensen. He applied zinc bands to two European starlings, but then realized that their weight altered the starlings' behavior, and switched to aluminum bands instead. Over the next decade and a half, he continued to band starlings, and by 1906, Mortensen had banded a total of 1550 individuals. By 1930, bird banding had become prevalent all over the world. The recovery of banded birds has been primarily used to identify migration routes.

Bird banding was revolutionized in the early 1950s, when mist-nets became widely available, and cannon-netting started to be used for capturing shorebirds and waterfowl. As a consequence, the number of recoveries of banded birds increased drastically, particularly in passerines [of or relating to the largest order (Passeriformes) of birds which includes over half of all living birds and consists chiefly of altricial songbirds of perching habits.]

Types of Bands

After capture, a band — nowadays made of aluminum or stainless steel — is usually placed on the bird's leg. Bands are available in a wide range of sizes, made to fit anything from a hummingbird to a swan. For large birds such as waterfowl, bands can also be worn as a neck collar. The metal band is engraved with a unique code that identifies the individual and also usually — depending on its size — with a return address. If the bird is either recaptured or found dead, and date and location of the find are reported, it is possible to infer routes and timing of migration, and even obtain estimates of longevity. Recovery rates are, however, usually very low: in many small species, less than 0.1% of banded individuals tend to be recovered, while in larger species, recovery rates can reach up to 20%.

In addition to the metal band, colored plastic bands are also often used. Natasha in her loon presentation discussed the colored leg bands used on loons.

One of the great advantages of bird banding is that — compared to many of the more recent technologies — it is cheap, easy to do, and it attracts a very large number of skilled volunteers, who both benefit from, and contribute to, the study and conservation of migratory birds

The Bird Banding Laboratory (Est. 1920), an integrated scientific program, supports the collection, curation, archiving, and dissemination of data from banded and marked birds. These data allow for developing effective bird science, management, and conservation. The lab, in collaboration with the Canadian Wildlife Service Bird Banding Office, administer the North American Bird Banding Program. When a banded bird is caught again in the future, researchers can learn important information about that bird's life, such as how far it travels and how long it lives. The band numbers of re-caught birds are always reported to the BBL, which compiles the information on where and when each bird is re-caught.

Becoming an experienced bander requires a lot of training, and gaining the necessary experience and skills can take years, but interested amateurs can still get involved. For banding stations that operate during the high volume migration season, there is usually a need for helpers, both with and without

Bird Banding, Cont.

experience. You can volunteer to help. You might begin by recording data as the bander dictates each measurement. With time, you can progress to learning how to safely and properly handle birds, then work with the bander to learn how to extract birds from mist nets.

Sources:

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/>
<https://blog.nature.org/2021/09/08/an-introduction-to-bird-banding/>
<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/what-bird-banding>
<https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/bird-banding-boreal.org>

Tidbits

The 2023 Fillmore County Forestry Field Day will be held July 26 at the home of Bill & Mary Bailey in rural Chatfield. Titled “Wildlife, Woodlands, Wetlands”. It will feature the creation of a wildlife sanctuary including the establishment of a bluebird trail, the creation of wetlands, trails, and biodiversity. For more information, call Mary Bailey at (507) 867-9118 or Aaren Mathison at the Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District Office at (507) 765-3878 extension 109.

Check out this online Public Domain book – “Emily’s Bluebird”
 A baby bird on the lawn—what to do? A fictional story about helping wildlife for children.
 My one objection is that they place a bluebird house on a tree. <https://d9-wret.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets/palladium/production/s3fs-public/atoms/files/emily-book.pdf>

From “What it’s like to be a bird,” by David Allen Sibley, Alfred Knopf, c2020. From the page on bluebirds:
 “If you find a broken eggshell on the ground, the shape of the pieces can give some information about what happened. If an egg hatches normally, the chick chips away a ring around the widest part of the egg and the egg separates into two halves. The parents then carry the eggshells from the nest and scatter them some distance away. An eggshell cut straight across in this way is likely to be the result of successful hatching nearby. Eggshells in smaller pieces, fragmented or crushed, could be the result of an accident or predation. Given the opportunity, many species of birds and small mammals will eat the contents of an egg and leave the shell behind.”

Video found on the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin YouTube Channel that is a good introduction to what is involved with bluebirding:

“Garden Expo 2023 -- Pat Ready's Bluebird Presentation & Q/A”

This is Pat Ready's presentation that he conducted on Bluebirds at the 2023 Madison, WI Garden Expo at the Alliant Energy Center. He is the BRAW County Coordinator for Dane County (Madison, WI)

They have several other videos besides this one worth checking out.

Photos by Doris Glander



Editor's Corner

I did not get all the names of the volunteers who helped at the 2023 Expo, but the board appreciates all the volunteers who helped set up the day before, helped with registration, and the silent auction and all the other things that make this event a success. Thanks to all the county coordinators who came and participated and helped, especially Mike Fulford, our local host and MC. Thanks to the Master Naturalists and several Franciscan nuns who helped with registration and the silent auction.

Interesting fact (not Bluebird related) that I learned from John Latimer's presentation: "Bloodroot seeds produce a lipid-rich appendage called an elaiosome, a nutritious food source for ants. Ants collect bloodroot seeds and carry them back to their nest, where they consume the elaiosome and discard the intact and viable seeds in old galleries or refuse tunnels. These refuse areas tend to be high in organic matter, phosphorus, potassium, and nitrogen—ideal for germinating bloodroot seeds. This mutually beneficial relationship between the bloodroot plant and native ants is known as "myrmecochory" or ant farming. The ants benefit from the nutritious food source, while the seeds that are "planted" in ant nests are safe from predation by rodents, avoid competition with parent plants, and have access to the essential nutrients present in the underground nests."

From Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*): An Annotated Bibliography

Recent BBRP Information Events:



Mary Kalinoski attended an event at the Loon Center in Cross Lake on the 13th and at the Bird Festival in Detroit Lakes May 20th.

Nancy Engel and Brianna Frisch attended the MN Master Naturalist annual conference at the Landscape Arboretum on Saturday, May 20. They reported interacting with over 150 people. David Schmidt did a presentation at the conference on Sunday morning, titled "Bluebirding: Up Close and Personal". He had 23 people attend, only 2 had previous bluebird experience, the up close and personal part was working out to the Arboretum's bluebird trail and checking two active nest boxes. Two paired boxes, one with chickadees and one with tree swallows. It was a perfect morning.

The board is seeking an enthusiastic 'Bluebirder' to join the team as a "Community Outreach manager". Annually BBRP presents educational bluebird information sessions at community events and celebrations, libraries, nature centers and State Parks – wherever there is an opportunity to spread the word about Bluebirding. The person filling this position will work with other board members, county coordinators and community planners to find the best places and events for BBRP to participate in. Send an inquiry email to info@bbrp.org to express your interest and we will share all the key information with you.



Photos by Doris Glander



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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Upcoming Events

Thursday, June 8

BBRP Information Table at Minnesota Zoo's "Night Out" event –
Apple Valley

Saturday, June 24

BBRP Booth at "Gammelgården Museum's Mid-summer Festival" –
Scandia MN

Also

BBRP Booth at the "42nd Annual Gammel Dag" – Peterson, MN

Tuesday, July 26

2023 Fillmore County Forestry Field Day – rural Chatfield

Wednesday, Aug 2

BBRP Booth at "Annual Green Fair" hosted by the Franciscan Sisters –
Little Falls, MN

September 1st thru the 3rd

BBRP Trailer at RICE COUNTY STEAM AND GAS: LABOR DAY SHOW

Saturday, September 30, 2023

ANNUAL FALL WILDLIFE FESTIVAL
Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge – Zimmerman 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."

Visit our Web-site at
www.bbrp.org



Photo by Doris Glander

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