



*"Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!"*

# Bluebird News



An Affiliate of NABS

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## Board Chairperson Report from David Schmidt

This may be my first newsletter chairperson message, if so my apologies as I'm now in my second term as the board chairperson. In my defense I've met many of you at one of the Expos over the past three years and give a 'state of the organization' message at the past two events.

Speaking of Expos, I hope you've seen the messages we've posted on the BBRP website regarding the 2024 Expo. We are moving to another outstate location in our ongoing effort to share the bluebird message as broadly as we can throughout the State. Redwood Falls will be our location in 2024, on the Minnesota River just upstream from New Ulm, historic Fort Ridgley, and the MN Historical Society site, the 1871 Harkin General Store. Follow everything Expo on our website: hotel rooms have been reserved, speakers are being engaged and registration will be available at bbrp.org beginning February 1. We look forward to seeing all of you there on April 20th.

As the 2023 bluebird nesting season is ending and as we see bluebirds grouping up for their journeys south, I would like to share some good news. With a little over 200 reports submitted so far this fall we are seeing an increase in chicks fledged by about 20% when comparing the same person reports from 2022. The fledge numbers per site has also increased by .5 chick. This is very good news as in 2022 numbers were up about 20% over the dramatic downturn in 2021, which saw a 45% drop from 2020.

Fingers crossed once all the numbers are in, we may have a complete recovery from the losses of 2021. If you haven't submitted your numbers yet, please do so by December 15. We are hoping to exceed the total number of reports submitted in 2022, which was an all-time low of 293. Paper and online forms can be found on

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our website at bbrp.org under "2023 Trail Reporting Forms".

To revive the reporting numbers, we combined 10 years of reporting data, about 3500 records, to determine who had stopped reporting and when. With that data, past and present members of the board, and a few county coordinators have been contacting people all over the state to understand why they stopped submitting reports and if BBRP can do anything to help. Some folks stopped due to the disappointment of no bluebirds in 2021, others have moved to where they could no longer have a trail and unfortunately some of our friends can no longer walk their trail due to age and physical conditions. We have encouraged those that can, to start reporting again and have helped a few find someone to take over their trail. We are hopeful these efforts will get us back to reporting numbers like what we saw ten or some years ago.

In the last newsletter we highlighted the Community Outreach we did in 2023, as we expanded those efforts to reach further into all regions of the state. I'm happy to report on and welcome a new member of the board, Phyllis Monthony. She is joining us to manage and continue our outreach efforts to get into even more communities in 2024. If there is a community event in your area you think would be appropriate for BBRP, please send an email to info@bbrp.org or call Phyllis at 518-955-2832.

That's it for now, thank you to all who have submitted your 2023 trail reports, thank you also for supporting BBRP with your membership and donations. I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it to the 2024 Expo in Redwood Falls on April 20th.

## 2023 Forestry Field Day Held at Bailey Sanctuary

On August 26, despite it being a very hot and humid evening, over 40 people gathered at the home of Bill & Mary Bailey, officially the Mary Catherine Bailey Wildlife Sanctuary, for the 13th Annual Forestry Field Day sponsored by the Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Participants experienced an evening of wildlife, woodlands, and wetlands. They were treated to a number of speakers including Mary who gave a short history of the Sanctuary's transformation from pasture to a haven for over 19 nesting bird species and over 120 bird species sighted there over the

30 year history of her ownership.

Using color images from aerial vantages, specialists from the Soil and Water Conservation Districts from both Olmsted and Fillmore Counties spoke on the importance of wetlands and the avenue by which landowners can create wetlands on their properties, thus increasing the biodiversity of their land. Both natural and constructed wetlands are present in this



*Angela White, of the Olmsted County Soil & Water Conservation District, explains the types of wetlands at the Sanctuary and their importance in our environment.*

Sanctuary and were fully explained, along with Decorah Shale geology. Bill explained basic trail maintenance and the strategies used to maximize the forest for wildlife and the future health of the forest. Other participants, professionals in forest management, added their ideas for the betterment of the woods.

One gentleman, over 90 years old, added a warm and interesting idea



*From next door neighbors to land owners from other counties, participants of all ages gathered for the 13th Annual Forestry Field Day*

to the gathering as we stood above a created wetland and in the shade of the trees along part of the 4 ½ miles of trails in the sanctuary. He commented about the divisiveness in the world today and marveled that all of us could come together from different backgrounds and beliefs in the agreement that we are stewards of the land and find harmony in the promotion of natural areas.

Earlier in the spring, students from Chatfield High School visited the Sanctuary and were introduced to forestry management and conservation practices used by the Baileys for the betterment of nature for the future.

## 18th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic

On Saturday, September 16, 2023, nearly twenty people gathered at the home of Bill & Mary Bailey for the 18th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic. Everyone enjoyed a potluck lunch with the main dish provided by Bill & Mary. They sat on the covered porch, in view of one of the Bailey's ponds to enjoy each others' company and share stories of the past bluebird season.

The Baileys live in a dedicated 58-acre wildlife sanctuary, which boasts 120 bird species sighted over the years and which has had

18 species confirmed nesting there. Small wonder that some of the attendees asked for a tour, which



*Bill Bailey demonstrates forestry practices at the recent SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic.*

led to an impromptu hike led by Bill, who is a regionally recognized forester. He explained the forestry practices he has made part of his life since graduating from the U of M with a degree in forestry, and Mary demonstrated the bluebird sights along one of the over four miles of trails which wind through the sanctuary. Chances are good that future picnics will include a hike in the sanctuary.

## Chanhassen Nature Preserve – Public Lands Nest Box Program Success

by Ann Cathcart, Minnesota Master Naturalist clrpath@mac.com | 612-868-2001

It was an exciting summer in Chanhassen Nature Preserve, a 113 acre previously grazed area situated between Lifetime Fitness corporate headquarters and Prince's Paisley Park, just south of State Highway 5. Four bluebirds fledged for the first time in at least six years.

My interest in bluebirds began in spring 2001 when my Girl Scout troop decided to place bluebird houses in the Preserve to fulfill requirements for a Nature badge. Dick Peterson came to a troop meeting to share his knowledge about attracting bluebirds. We used his blueprint to build nine nesting boxes and placed them strategically off the paved path in the Preserve. It took a few years before the bluebirds discovered these wooden nest boxes. My co-leader was stunned at the beautiful blueness of these birds when she saw one fly by for the first time in her life!



*New Gilbertson nest box in the Chanhassen Preserve.*

Most of the Peterson boxes were home to tree swallows but bluebirds preferred two boxes where there were fledglings for years until there were none. That is when I noticed a neighbor was leaving scrap food for wildlife near a pond by the bluebirds'

favorite houses. I tried to educate my neighbor about the perils of feeding wildlife. I suspected there was a correlation when I noticed a raccoon by the Cheetos that were left.

I spoke with Keith Radel at the 2019 Annual Bluebird Expo in Cannon Falls about this unfortunate circumstance. I learned that raccoons were probably the culprit, climbing the wide stakes holding the Petersons, then scavenging the bluebird eggs--even the babies. I bought two Gilbertson nest boxes to place in a different area of the Preserve hoping bluebirds would find these new homes.

That following summer, house wrens took over one box and bluebirds built a nest in the box ten feet from it but only one egg was laid and the nest was abandoned. That scenario continued until I learned about the BBRP grant program

and submitted a grant late in 2022 for nine Gilbertsons to replace the nine Petersons which were in desperate disrepair. I thank the BBRP for honoring my request for nine bluebird nest boxes. The City of Chanhassen park foreman joined me when David Schmidt visited the Preserve and walked the two mile path with us on a frigid day in mid-March 2023, sharing his expertise about

the best placement. A week or so later, I was surprised to see the new nest boxes deep in snow banks ready to receive occupants.

Out of the eleven nest boxes, four had tree swallows, two with chickadees, one with a wren and



*New hatchlings in the nest box this summer.*

four remained empty or with an unfinished nest until mid-July when my sister discovered bluebird eggs in the box on the busy road near the entrance to the Lifetime complex.

It was fun monitoring them over the next few weeks. Eggs were laid around July 9th and hatched around July 23rd. They looked ready to fledge on August 6th. The dad was very attentive, seen flying in and out of the nest box and keeping watch from a nearby tree branch.

The nestlings fledged and were gone within a 48 hour period between August 6th and August 8th when I saw the empty nest. I felt as I did when my last child left for college; truly an empty nest syndrome. The excitement of the first bluebird recovery in a long time was over. Chanhassen Nature Preserve is prepared for bluebirds to discover welcoming nest boxes next year.

## Editor's Corner by Virginia Windschitl

Had a nice visit with Ron Guck and his wife Deian at their home in Hastings.

He was the 2022 Bluebirder of the Year. He had a Knights of Columbus event the same weekend as our 2023 Expo in Little Falls where the award winner was announced so I didn't get to meet him then. He found out about it later and the award plaque was delivered to him.



*Ron Gluck's 2022 Bluebirder of the Year award with the award-winning photo featuring one of his nestboxes.*

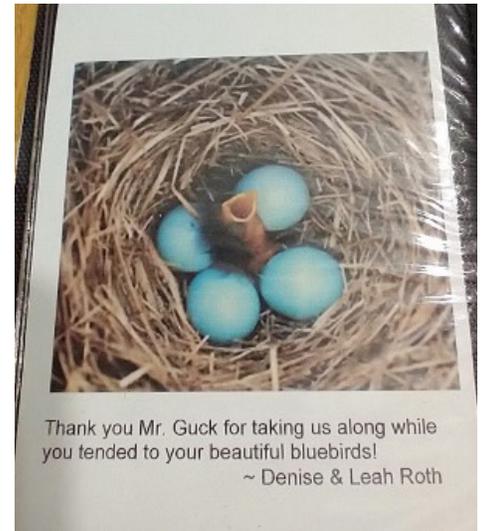
In 2022 he had 382 bluebirds fledged. He had an even better year in 2023 with 433 bluebirds fledged with 11 single nests and 70 pairs. He also had a few chickadees.

After being a trucker for many years, he started working at Bellwood Oaks golf course south of Hastings. There had been a few old bluebird houses someone had put up there and he found a nest with a bad roof and with baby bluebirds inside that had gotten wet so he took out the old nest and put in dry grass to replace it. He told his boss about it and his boss said he would buy new nestboxes at \$10 each from Ron if he made them for the golf course. Ron made 30 nestboxes and had 100 fledged that first year in 2004.

He has kept very detailed records with color coding when nests are found, checking every week and covers over 40 miles to check all his boxes. He sprays with vanilla every visit as soon as he finds eggs. I thought it was interesting that when cleaning out nests he cracks open any unhatched eggs to see if they were fertile.

The spare bedroom in their home is where his bluebird award is hung along with photos and trophies from his many hunting trips for deer, turkeys, and wild boar. He hunted boar down in Texas for many years with his late brother. Under his BBRP award is a photo taken by a young girl of one of his nestboxes. She won a ribbon at the fair for the photo and gave Ron a copy.

He also had a photo album from someone who came along on his trail that included a darling photo of a just hatched bluebird. (See Below) So sweet!



## Public Lands Nest Box Program

The BBRP board has again authorized funding in 2023 – 2024 to award up to 50 nest boxes to qualifying applicants. Applications will be accepted until February 1st of 2024, with awards being made and boxes distributed in March of 2024.

The program requirements and an application form can be found on the BBRP website, [www.bbrp.org](http://www.bbrp.org) under the heading "Public Lands Nest Box Program." Questions about the program can be sent to [info@bbrp.org](mailto:info@bbrp.org).



*Photos by Doris Glander*

## Introducing Phyllis Monthony

*Phyllis was invited to join the BBRP Board as our new Community Outreach Coordinator.*

I was born and lived one mile from the Canadian Border in Champlain, NY. When I was 7 we moved where I was raised in a small mining town called Tahawus, in Upstate New York at the base of Mt. Marcy, the highest peak in New York. This was also the place that President Theodore Roosevelt frequented especially during hunting season, where he was at the time he was summoned to the White House when President McKinley was shot. There are many wonderful memories and much history from that region. When I was 14 the town of Tahawus was abandoned and the residents moved about 25 miles to the Town of Newcomb in a section called Winebrook Hills.

When I was 9 or 10 and in Brownie Scouts, we were taken to a woman's home and into her backyard where we were surrounded by flowers and many birds. Most of all the birds I saw, I was familiar with; however, for the very first time I saw my very first Northeastern Bluebird! Oh, how my heart leapt with a sense of excitement and then

a very calming peace and joy came over me.

I had not seen another bluebird until 1986, when visiting a new church for the first time. Even though I felt very much welcomed and at home seeing several people I knew from work, I was questioning myself about this being the right place for me and I asked God to show me a sign. As I walked out the door, I was looking up and saw a bluebird sitting on the telephone wires. That same excitement came back then the peace washed over me again, and I knew in my heart of hearts that I was where I was supposed to be.

We had moved out here in 1999 to 2005 and when I questioned the move, again I saw a bluebird outside the window at my son's home and they had never seen one there before! This same sort of thing has happened to me many times over the years and in 2010, when we were in preliminary process of buying a new home on none other than "Bluebird Road" and sure enough there was a BB house on the fence and a pair of bluebirds living in the house. We lived there for 13 years and over those years we watched the bluebirds move in and out of 5 different houses, raise

their broods and move on when the weather got too cold, then come back with the warmer weather.

We decided we would move to Minnesota with retirement to be near my son, his wife and our three grandchildren. We got here in July 2021 and I was disappointed that I hadn't seen any bluebirds. To be honest, I was a little worried since I hadn't seen a sign for our decision, either. We had put up feeders with the "Mealworm" delicacy the bluebirds like and were disappointed that we saw very few birds and not one bluebird from 7-2021 to spring 2023.

We had actually brought a bluebird house with us and in May, 2023 I asked my husband to put it up. He started it on a Sunday and finished it on a Monday and on Thursday we had a pair of bluebirds moving in!!! It has been a joy caring for them and watching them.

I have not lost that caring for the bluebirds. I still get excited at seeing them and it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of the BBRP and to serve on their Board as the Community Outreach Coordinator.

## Tidbits

### Interesting (undated) Online Article:

<https://georgiawildlife.com/out-my-backdoor-bluebird-family-life-isnt-always-what-it-seems-be>

"Bluebirds were long considered to be one of the 91 percent of all bird species that are monogamous. Such is not always the case, however. In one study, for example, 15 percent of adult females and 5 percent of adult male bluebirds were found caring for at least one nestling that was not their own."

Also "Many male bluebirds actually discriminate against male offspring! "

### North Carolina Bluebird Society has a nice online store of bluebird themed gifts:

<https://www.cafepress.com/northcarolinabluebirdsociety/14523892>



Follow us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/BluebirdRecoveryProgram>

**Help on the Bluebird Trail by Marlys Shirley**

This photo shows you four very special bluebirders who have a heart for our “gems of blue”: Sydney Seufer, Robert Edmunds, Jenica Pospisil, and Virginia Windshit!! This is the second year my established trail of fourteen paired sites south of Lakeville has been kept active by volunteers taking my place seeing that they are monitored and cared for weekly throughout the nesting season after husband Glen checks and repairs them in the spring. Jenica was new to the experience this year, trained in by Sydney, who began her trail monitoring last year. Bob and Virginia both worked the trail last year as well, so the four of them rotated on a schedule with records



*L to R: Bob Edmonds, Sharon Edmonds, Glen Shirley, Virginia Windschitl, Marlys Shirley, Sydney Seufer, Jenica Pospisil.*

kept on a spread sheet by Sydney and turned in to BBRP at the end of the season. The season resulted in a total of eighty-one bluebirds successfully

fledged! This number exceeds last year’s by about twenty, so we hope it indicates continued recovery after some low numbers in past years resulting from devastating storms in the south at migration time in spring. The bluebirding team all celebrated together sharing stories, questions, and discoveries in an enjoyable evening at a restaurant in September. Thanks to them all for their help in overseeing these nesting bluebirds to get their eighty-one baby bluies “on the wing”!!

Marlys Shirley  
Trail of Delight

*Bluebird Recovery Program of MN Membership Enrollment*

Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota membership includes: an initial information packet containing full color copies of “A Trail Guide to Successful Bluebirding,” “See How Bluebird Chicks Grow,” the current copy of BBRP’s quarterly newsletter and other helpful bluebird documents. Along with the quarterly newsletter there is an annual membership meeting/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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how you’d like to receive the BBRP quarterly Newsletter \_\_\_ via email or \_\_\_ via USPS.

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**

You can also join or renew your membership online at: [Membership | Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota](#)



## 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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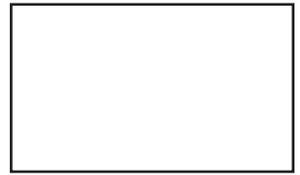
# Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 15, 2023**  
Trail Reports are due

**April 20, 2024**  
Bluebird Expo  
Redwood Falls, 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](http://www.bbrp.org)



Photos by Doris Glander

*Thank you to everyone who wrote articles or provided photographs for this publication of the Bluebird News.*