



Sustaining Bluebirds For Future Generations

Bluebird News



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Summer 2025

Bluebird houses, book take flight after family loss



Kristy's father, Ryan Rudolph, holding up a pair of bluebird houses he made in honor of his late wife, Pat.

Contributed photo

By Scott Thoma

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The solemn news that her mother was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer seven years ago hit Corcoran native Kristy Boike like a ton of bricks. Still, that wasn't the hardest part.

"I think it was harder watching my dad losing the love of his life and seeing their story come to an end," said Boike, who now lives in New Prague with her husband, Joe, and their four children. "My parents had been married 30 years. She was the glue that held everything and everyone together."

When Pat Rudolph, Kristy's mother, passed away in 2018 from a brain tumor, her father, Ryan Rudolph, had trouble sleeping because all the photos and smells in the house reminded him of his late wife. He soon developed

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anxiety issues.

On one of those restless nights, Ryan, a woodworker by trade, went out to his workshop at 1 a.m. to keep his mind occupied. He grabbed a piece of wood, turned on the table saw, and just started cutting. As he looked up, one of the bluebird houses he had previously constructed caught his eye, so he decided to duplicate it. After all, bluebirds were Pat's favorite birds because of their color. He had built several other bluebird houses that were stationed on their property.

Ryan continued to cut pieces of wood and screw the pieces together until he had made nearly a dozen of the bluebird houses. Keeping busy was helping him cope with the grief.

"Dad called me one day and asked me if I could help him get rid of a bunch of bluebird houses that he had built," Kristy said. "I wanted to help him in any way because I knew what he was going through, so I jumped at the chance to help. Working with his hands was healing his heart."

Kristy advertised the bluebird houses for sale online and the story went viral overnight. Orders

for houses were pouring in and Kristy was trying to keep up "shipping them all over the country," so she pulled in other family members to help. A portion of the proceeds from the bluebird houses were donated to Our Lady of Peace Hospice in St Paul where Pat spent her final days.

"Along with many others, we had four generations of family members helping with the houses, including my

Bluebird houses, book take flight after family loss continued...

dad, my grandpa, myself and my kids," Boike said. "Dad made a map one time and put pins in it to indicate where the houses ended up. They were in almost every state."

Some of the purchased houses were in remembrance of a lost one, such as one woman in Mankato who lost her mother. The woman spoke with her other siblings and they all purchased a bluebird house in memory of their mother. Orders for 25-50 houses were coming in from some people and businesses. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and 4-H groups were selling uncut bluebird kits at workshops.

Ryan eventually remarried and discontinued making the birdhouses out of respect for his current wife.

Meanwhile, Kristy had started a support group in her area to help others understand and cope with the loss of a loved one. She also needed something to keep her

"I felt an obligation to my mother," she said. "So, I started writing as an outlet for my own grief."

mind busy as she felt the loss of her mother. Through the encouragement from others in the support group, Kristy began to write.

Her children's book, "Rise up Little Bluebirds," came out two years ago. Proceeds from the book are also being donated to hospice care.

The book's focus is to teach children how to cope with grief, and Boike said it was written specifically for people touched by the common thread of loss.

"Grief is such an isolating experience," Boike said. "I hope that the message will resonate with children and adults, alike, while delivering a compelling message to today's uncertain time that although we may be separated from the ones we care for, I love the unending connection that binds us all."

Boike said some people find it difficult to talk to their children about death and there is a misunderstanding that kids are unable to comprehend it. "Trying to be authentic and real is important for children to understand," she said.



The grandma bluebird on the cover of the book represents Boike's mother. Her children — Matthew, 20; Grace, 18; Ryan, 17; and Noah, 9 — also represent some of the bluebirds featured in the book.

For one of his third-grade homework assignments this year, Noah was given a piece of paper with a drawing of an outline of a book and asked to name his favorite book and decorate the drawing. He had no problem quickly turning the drawing into "Rise up Little Bluebirds," and proudly indicated that the author was his very own mother. "I sat down and cried," Kristy said.

Boike has partnered with community organizations and individuals that provide her with bluebird houses to take along when she attends events or book signings. Some of the birdhouses are made by volunteers from Our Lady of Peace Hospice that Boike previously had connected with.

"Rise up Little Bluebirds" is available online at www.riseuplittlebluebirds.com.



Kristy with her book "Rise up Little Bluebirds." Proceeds from the book are being donated to hospice. Contributed photo.

Faye Sargent Donation

The Bluebird Program of Minnesota is thankful for a Memorial donation received in honor of **Faye Sargent**. Faye Ann Sargent passed away March 10, 2025, at the age of 79. Forrest & Faye Sargent founded Sargent's Landscape Nursery, Inc. in Rochester, Minnesota in 1971.



New Board President

As BBPMN's board leader for the past five years it's time for someone else to take the helm of our great organization. Our bylaws allow a chairperson to serve two two-year terms, which I have done. By approval of the board an additional year was added to continue implementing our 'Regional County Coordinator' concept, which has allowed us to attend more community events throughout the state and to add two new county coordinators. With the one-year extension I was also able to lead the organization through a name change. We are now the Bluebird Program of Minnesota with an updated logo, a new website name, www.bbpmn.org and a new email address, info@bbpmn.org.

Upon completion of these goals, I'm happy to introduce our newly elected board chairperson, President, Nancy Engel. Nancy has been a bluebirder in Dakota county for 10 years where she leads community trail monitoring. She has been a board member for the past five years and has been the Expo chairperson for the past two. She brings a wealth of leadership from her past and current job; she is truly well prepared to lead BBPMN further into the future. Please join me in welcoming Nancy to her new role.

David Schmidt



Sustaining Bluebirds For Future Generations

Our new logo



Bringing back Bluebirds for Future Generations!

Our old logo

Bluebird Extravaganza



Join us at Fluegels in Rosemount to celebrate bluebirds!

September 13, 2025 | 9:00am–12:00pm

*Fix your broken nest boxes * Chat with experts
 *New & rehabbed nest boxes for sale *Bring the kids *Play games to learn about bluebirds

20th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic

Saturday, September 20, 2025, marks the date for the 20th Annual SE MN Bluebirders' Picnic.

As in the past, it will be at the home of Bill & Mary Bailey, Olmsted and Fillmore County Coordinator, 9400 150th Avenue, SE, Chatfield, MN. Bill & Mary will furnish the main dish, tableware, seating, and beverages. Attendees are welcome to bring a dish to share. (Bluebirders are known to be good cooks!) Bill will lead an optional hike after lunch, and the picnic will be "rain or shine" because the Baileys have a sizable covered porch.

Questions, call (507) 867-9118.

Please be mindful of the I-90/US 52 construction when coming south on US 52. All interested in bluebirds or nature in general are welcome.



Expo 2026 Save the Date

Over the last several years, we've seen a decline in attendance at our in-person Expos, so we'd like to try something new next year to address this issue. For 2026, we'll offer our Expo in a virtual format to attendees rather than in-person. You'll be able to watch interesting presentations from our guest speakers and catch up with all the latest happenings with the Board, all in the comfort of your own home. And we're paring down the time frame to 9am-noon to make it easier on people's busy schedules. We hope that by offering the Expo in this format, we'll increase our attendance and improve the overall experience for our attendees.

Now to the date; the 2026 Expo will be held on Saturday, April 11th. We'll let you know soon about all the details for registration so stay tuned for that. We look forward to the new, and hopefully improved, Expo!

2026 EXPO

Saturday | April 11th, 2026

MYBirdClub



One of the speakers at our 2025 Expo was Amy Simso Dean. She gave a presentation called Birdwatching 101 and we could certainly see how her enthusiasm for birding can entertain and inspire our youth.

She is the founder, Executive Director, and one of the guides at MyBirdClub. She has been birding for over 30 years. She founded MYBirdClub in 2014 in a Minneapolis Public Elementary School. She also co-founded The Kestrels (an inclusive birding club for MN women) where she organizes bird-related events and field trips. Amy also volunteers with the Minnesota Ornithologists Union.

In 2010 she started volunteering for The Raptor Center's education department, giving tours and presenting live bird programs. Now she works there part time in a variety of roles. In 2024 she became a MN Master Naturalist.

MYBirdClub is a nonprofit youth birdwatching club. Since 2014, this 501(c)(3) organization has established a proven record of creating a fun, club environment while teaching kids and adults about birds, their habitats, natural history and conservation.

They host free events around the Twin Cities area. Upcoming events can be found at <https://www.mybirdclub.org/> and you can register online.



What to expect if you sign up:

Binoculars are available for free. A 2025 Waiver is required, good for all 2025 outings. Kids 13 & up do not need an adult present. At each event professional guides lead the activities. Kids earn fun charms to add to their MYBirdClub Milestones Lanyard.

This is how they define their mission:

"MYBirdClub benefits kids by getting them outside and connecting them to nature with other kids. Experiencing the outdoors is proven to reduce stress, positively affect mood, and in some studies improve academic outcomes.

MYBirdClub also ultimately benefits birds by inspiring the next generation of birders, conservationists and environmentalists. MYBirdClub helps instill a desire to care for birds and shows kids and adults how they can weave personal conservation actions and efforts into their everyday lives. They share easy conservation practices that kids and adults can adopt, whether community science or personal efforts like bird friendly coffee and native plantings."



County Coordinator Spotlight – Jonathan Willow – Blue Earth



County Coordinator Spotlight

Jonathan Willow is one of our newest county coordinators. He grew up in Upstate New York and Minnesota. He developed a love for bluebirds and all other wildlife through his parents' encouragement and

an education in Conservation Biology and Entomology. After spending eight years doing insect research in Estonia, Iceland and Belgium, Jon returned to Minnesota to settle with his wife and dog. He currently works as southwest Minnesota's Precision Agriculture and Conservation Specialist for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever. In this role, he promotes the use of conservation practices in and around farmlands. Jon is a firm believer that we must be stewards of our planet and share it with all other being that inhabit it. Some of his bird and insect conservation tactics include promoting cover crops, diversified/alternative cash crops, the continued development of RNA biopesticides, and the protection of both terrestrial and freshwater habitats. Jon loves drumming, musky fishing, and science fiction.

Telling Eagles Apart

At our Expo the Eagle Center speaker Scott Mehus talked about this.

Al Batt wrote: **“How can I tell a golden eagle from a bald eagle?”**

Their bodies are similar in weight and wingspan, with the females being larger. Golden eagles have feathers on their legs to their feet, whereas bald eagles have yellow skin on their ankles. Bald eagles have large beaks, about one-third the size of their heads, while goldens have smaller beaks. Adult golden eagles have tri-colored beaks, while the white-headed adult bald eagle beaks have a solid yellow color. Immature birds of both species have similar coloration, but a golden eagle has white wrist patches, a white tail with a distinct dark terminal band, and dark armpits. Immature balds have white-mottled plumages and white armpits.



Adult Golden Eagle
© Bryan Calk/ Macaulay Library



Adult Bald Eagles
© Nigel Voaden / Macaulay Library

Editor's Notes

The board has often discussed whether the Expo should be held every year. Finding locations with enough space at a reasonable cost and all the other logistics takes a lot of effort. With Covid we gained experience running a virtual Expo in 2021. One possibility is alternating In-person and virtual meeting every other year. Personal connections at in-person events are valuable but there are also benefits of online events. Virtual meetings mean we can reach

people in all parts of the state, don't have to worry about the weather, and can concentrate on getting top-notch speakers. Let us know what you think.

Personally I've had a so-so year. With 4 pairs of boxes I only fledged 9 bluebirds, down from 14 last year. With the cold weather in the spring I lost a nest of 5 babies. So sad, and I heard that was a common occurrence for others as well. Thanks for all you do to help our bluebirds.

Membership Updates

Looking to inform us of a change of address, have a new email address or phone number you want to share? With our online **Membership System** you can log into your personal account and make those changes instantly. Simply go to our membership web page. There you'll be directed how to access your personal account if you've never done so before or how to login if you've already established a username and password.

If you're wondering when your membership expires, click on the "Subscriptions" tab while you're logged into your personal account. Your expiration date will be at the far right of the line.

If you have never provided BBPMN with an email address, you can't match your email to your personal account, or have an entirely different question email us at info@bbpmn.org for assistance. Please indicate your preferred method to respond to your question, if you prefer a phone call, provide us with the number we can reach you at. Thank you!

Trail Reports are Important

Both individual and trail reports are vital to our organization. When the data is gathered and analyzed, it allows us to know the health of our bluebird population. It tells us where we have been successful and where we need to do more work. We need to know your statistics whether you have one nest box or a whole trail, whether you fledged hundreds of chicks, or none at all. Please take the time to completely and accurately fill in your trail report form(s).

Complete a separate form for each trail you are reporting on.

Reports are due by **December 31, 2025**

To report your results go to our website: <https://bbpmn.org/> Click on **2025 Trail Reporting Forms**. You can either fill out the online report form or download a printable version to mail in.

Mail Report form to: Wally Swanson, 128 South Buchanan, Waterville, MN 56096.

Questions call Wally @ 507-362-8760. Email: dendroica55@gmail.com

Bluebird Program of MN Membership Enrollment & Renewal

A Bluebird Program of Minnesota membership includes - an initial Information packet containing a full color Trail Guide and Top Ten Tips to Successful Bluebirding, the latest BBPMN's quarterly newsletter and a 'See How Chicks Grow' color sheet. Consultation and advice are available by phone, text, e-mail or in the field. Your membership fee is tax deductible. You can contact us at info@bbpmn.org. Please note there will be no refunds and memberships are not transferable to another person or organization.

New Member Renewal

Membership Periods Are:

2 years \$30.00 5 years \$60.00 Lifetime \$175.00

Name Address

City State Zip County

Phone Email

Please indicate how you'd like to receive the BBPMN 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:

BBPMN c/o Brianna Frisch, 11018 Taylor Hill Road, Minnieska, MN 55910

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 BBMN is looking for more county coordinators. If interested, email us at info@bbpmn.org for more information.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, September 13, 2025

Bluebird Extravaganza, Rosemount | 9:00 am–12:00 pm

Saturday, September 20, 2025

12th Annual SE Minn. Bluebirders' Picnic, Chatfield

Saturday, September 27 - 29th Annual Wildlife Festival

**Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Oak Savanna Learning Center
Zimmerman**

Saturday, April 11, 2026

Bluebird Expo

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."



Photos by Doris Glander

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