



Bluebird News



Habitat & Nest Tree Selection and Detectability of Breeding Woodpeckers in Northern Minnesota



Downy Woodpecker on a Branch.

Dr. Hiller of Bemidji State arranged for his graduate student Kaysie to present her research for her masters thesis on woodpeckers at our Zoom Expo. She monitored the nesting habits of the species of woodpeckers found in northwestern Minnesota. She also noted how the woodpeckers nesting and denning cavities benefit other bird species.

She did a two-year research project (2022-2023) looking for woodpecker nests in the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area and Beltrami Island State Forest in northwestern Minnesota, which consists of over one million acres.

The goal of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources study was to learn more about the age and size of trees, predominantly aspen, that woodpecker

species — hairy woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers, northern flickers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, red-headed woodpeckers, black-backed woodpeckers, and pileated woodpeckers — choose for their nests.

As part of the study, Maleski and several assistants found and monitored woodpecker nests in predetermined study areas throughout the forest and WMA, predominantly along roads and trails. They also took core samples that were later examined in the lab to accurately determine the age of the trees. (See video here: <https://bsualumni.org/speaking-for-the-trees-bsus-tree-ring-lab-supports-dnr-research/>)

In 2023 Maleski had two student interns working with her to help find and monitor nests. The crew found 160 woodpecker nests. (There were 66 found in 2022 when she started later in May and had less help). After finding a nest she would visit the site at least once a week to determine if the hatchlings fledged or the nest failed.

Results from the study could have implications for logging plans on DNR wildlife management and forestry lands. Most

woodpeckers preferred trees that were 60 years or older. Typically, aspen on DNR-owned and -managed lands are harvested at about age 50-60 for use in the pulp and paper industry. The study showed the 60-year rotation provides adequate habitat for most woodpeckers, but pileated woodpeckers prefer older trees.

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Introducing Expo Speaker: Kaysie Maleski



Kaysie Maleski, Assistant Animal Survey Coordinator, Minnesota DNR

I assist with surveying and monitoring wildlife populations at Camp Ripley Training Center. I also assist with other regions with various nongame projects mainly in northern Minnesota.

Kaysie's wildlife story: Growing up I always had an appreciation for the outdoors. I was lucky enough to have grandparents who took me out in the woods to do syruping, camping, going for hikes, looking for birds and enjoying the peacefulness at a remote cabin. When I went to school for wildlife, I didn't fully know which way I wanted to go with my career until a few years after graduating. I got a seasonal job working with the critically endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow down in central Florida. Working with that sensitive, cryptic, mysterious ground nesting bird made me realize I wanted to work with birds and other endangered species. That job set a wheel in motion for my passion to work with nongame birds and study their populations.

To learn more about woodpeckers check out this book I found at my local library:

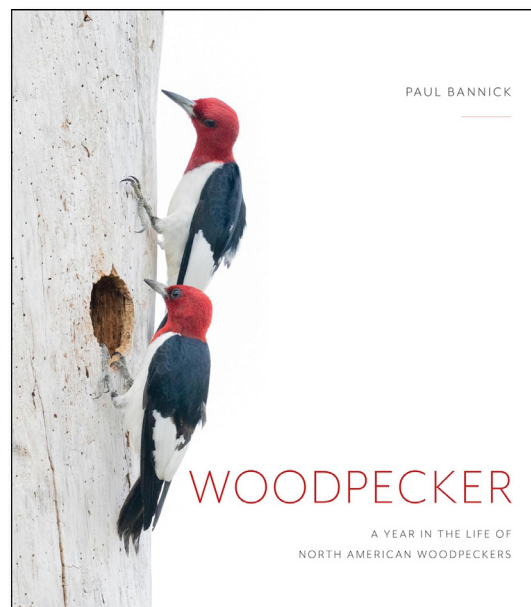
Woodpecker; A Year in the Life of North American Woodpeckers by Paul Bannick

- Publisher: Mountaineers Books
- Publication Date: August 23, 2025

Amazon Description:

"Woodpeckers are one of the most remarkable bird species found in the avian world. They have evolved in ways that make them ecologically critical to forest health, serving as keystone species in a variety of wooded habitats across North America. Their activities support a variety of other creatures, making them catalysts of diversity in the places they inhabit. They are, in many ways, the heartbeat of the forest.

Informed by his own experiences in the field as well as extensive research, author and photographer Paul Bannick delves into the natural and cultural history of woodpeckers from the boreal forest of northern Canada to oak woodlands and conifer forests in the United States to the wet tropical forests of Mexico and the Caribbean. He captures the woodpeckers' charismatic behavior as well as their colorful displays and sensitive habitats in astonishing images. And with accessible, science-based text, Bannick explores their courtship and nest selection process in spring; life in the nest during summer; fledging and gaining independence in autumn; and the challenges of winter survival. He compares and contrasts typical behavior and anomalies among the 41 woodpecker species in North America, and shares their conservation outlook for the future. Robust captions, interesting sidebars, and a comprehensive field guide round out this extraordinary volume."



“Wholly absorbing—a sure-fire way to turn even a casual birder into a woodpecker fanatic.”

Video about the book:

https://www.amazon.com/vdp/0e6f7d-6b3ed74db6bfcfc5f53a596ebc?aci=amzn1.ive.vendor.video.0e6f7d6b3ed74db6bfcfc5f53a596ebc&product=1680513168&ref=cm_sw_cp_r_ib_dt_lzyf8cHtu5qQ

2026 Virtual Expo

Over a hundred people tuned into our virtual Expo on April 11th and we got positive feedback about the format. People appreciated the convenience of attending while at home rather than having to drive long distances to attend an in-person event. We did have a couple of suggestions that perhaps we could alternate between in-person and virtual. There is something special about the opportunity to catch up with old friends and make some new ones at an in-person event.

The board members will keep that in mind as we discuss how we want to approach future Expo formats. If you have an opinion about the Expo, please let us know by emailing us at info@bbpmn.org. We did get a consensus from all who gave us feedback that they found the presentations informative and enjoyable. Thank you

to everyone for attending and for those who couldn't, you can request a copy of that recording via email if you'd like to watch it. We do ask that you not share this video on social media or with other folks.

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the board members for participating in the Expo, especially David Schmidt who did a lot of promotional work and monitored the registrations, and to Karah Bausch Olson who provided Zoom tech help to me. The Expo is a group effort, and it can't be done without a lot of assistance, so thank you, board members!

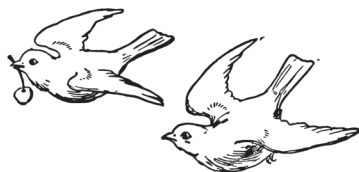
~ Nancy Engel

Bluebirder of the Year

Congratulations

At our virtual Expo Wally Swanson announced the **"Bluebirder of the Year."**

This time it was a team of sisters, Angie Wick and Cindy Stern. They took over monitoring their father's trail after he passed away. Their dad was Ronald Guck and in this photo they are standing in front of the award their father received as "Bluebirder of the Year" in 2022.



Monitoring Tip from Michigan Bluebird Newsletter

John Harville, MBS county coordinator, has this tip for monitors:

"When monitoring your nest box, here is a tip I discovered years ago while walking and talking with a naturalist to monitor a nature center bluebird trail. Bluebirds are curious and will most often fly out to the nearest cover to assess what is coming. After hearing us talk to each other while moving closer, the incubating females flew out of most boxes. Since that time, I have always talked out loud to myself while nearing boxes solo that I know are holding incubating females. As they hear you getting closer, they will emerge 95% of the time. I would much rather see them come out that way than be stressed by an abruptly opening door, to which I just say, 'Thank you, Mother.'"



Learn to Recognize Nests and Eggs

Your nestbox may also be enjoyed by other native cavity-nesters like tree swallows, chickadees, or house wrens. Here's how to recognize who is nesting:



Bluebird: Neat, woven nest of 100% fine grass or pine needles, with a fairly deep nestcup. Occasionally bits of fur or a few feathers. Eggs are powder blue, sometimes white.

Black-Capped Chickadee: Downy nest of moss, fur, and soft plant fibers. Female may cover eggs with moss when leaving the box. Small white eggs with brown/rose speckles.

Tree Swallow: Grass nest begins to be filled with feathers, 4 -7 eggs, very pale pink at first, fading to white.

House Wren: Messy nest of twigs, occasionally lined with fine fibers or feathers. Males may build loose, egg-less "dummy nests" in nearby boxes to reduce competition. Tiny glossy white eggs tinted pink/buff, with lots of fine brown/reddish brown/brown specks that are sometimes concentrated in a ring on the larger end of the egg.

House Sparrow: Tall, often messy nest with tunnel like entrance. Jumble of odds and ends, including coarse grass with seed heads, cloth, white feathers, twigs and sometimes litter. Eggs are cream/white/gray or greenish with many irregular brown speckles.



Magic Again on County Road 136 by Mary Bailey

About twenty years ago, Loren "Murph" Murphy told me, "Mary, you have got to get boxes on this county road." I followed his insistent direction and have been gratified ever since. Olmsted County Road 136 is one area I can make guarantees about. In early spring, if you drive or walk down it, you will see, and possibly hear, a bluebird.

This season, there is a first! A mother bluebird has laid and is now hatching seven eggs. There has been another large clutch on that trail, but there were two females in that instance. This box is one belonging to the family of Jen and Sterling Bud, and their two sites last year produced twenty fledglings. There is no doubt that Murph was right about this area being prime habitat for bluebirds. I am always grateful for these generous landowners for making bluebirds so welcome.



Christmas Project: A Labor of Love by Mary Bailey

The family of Ken Hollerman from Fountain, MN, has a Christmas tradition of making bluebird nestboxes on Christmas day and giving them to interested people. They gave six of them to Mary Bailey, Olmsted and Fillmore County Coordinator, for distribution in that very successful bluebird area.

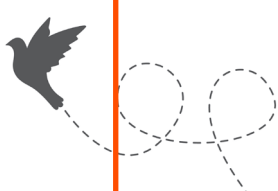


Captions:

100 Patches Earned, 100+ Bluebirds Fledged



Keith Radel	Faribault	798
Ann E S Wick	Black Earth	486
Loren & Ardy Murphy	Faribault	429
Angie Wick & Cindy Stern	Mounds View	362
Mary & William Bailey	Chatfield	280
Ronald Jensen	Park Rapids	280
Steve Dietz	Frontenac	267
Mason Hjeile	Mora	230
Mike Juresek	Rushford	219
Brianna Frisch	Minneiska	214
Mary Roen	River Falls	208
Laura and Vince Mangan	Spring Valley	207
Larry Buhr	Faribault	177
Donald Johnson	Rochester	165
Jeanne Wilkinson	Anoka	151
Quintin Lohse	Chatfield	147
James Taylor	Inver Grove Heights	146
Fern Vesledahl	Nerstrand	139
Bart Anderson	Eden Prairie	133
Peter Meyer	Mound	127
Steve Malecha	Cannon Falls	120
Don Glassing	Inver Grove Heights	112
Sherry Taylor	Northfield	105
Dennis Malinke	Brownsville	103
Bob & Sandy Rajkowski	Rice	102



2025 Totals as Reported to BBPMN

	Sites	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged		Sites	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged
2025 Total Minnesota	3,797	14,658	12,430	10,999	Kanabec	48	249	233	230
2025 Total Wisconsin	170	967	800	725	Kandiyohi	32	48	41	37
					LeSueur	44	74	64	55
MN Counties	Sites	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Lyon	28	18	11	11
Anoka	101	341	290	268	Morrison	55	183	175	172
Becker	4	14	14	14	Mower	75	441	336	312
Benton	30	148	120	107	Olmsted	272	1218	999	900
Carlton	1	5	4	4	Pennington	14	0	0	0
Carver	125	271	225	210	Pine	13	28	27	26
Chisago	23	210	156	118	Ramsey	85	286	234	206
Crow Wing	7	25	24	24	Rice	638	3400	2830	2430
Dakota	395	1418	1245	1110	Scott	129	225	192	188
Dodge	18	43	24	24	Sherbourne	26	94	85	71
Douglas	18	58	42	40	St. Louis	10	13	12	10
Filmore	210	1206	1070	972	Stearns	37	189	161	106
Freeborn	4	14	14	14	Steele	15	23	23	23
Goodhue	125	693	551	460	Wabasha	21	94	73	66
Hennepin	638	1456	1263	1090	Wadena	7	6	6	59
Houston	86	375	323	248	Washington	227	641	632	577
Hubbard	82	336	305	280	Winona	44	305	277	265
Isanti	15	20	18	18	Wright	95	361	298	290

In **2024** there were **4,307 Nest Sites**, **14,477 Eggs Laid**, **12,439 Hatched Bluebirds**, **11,592 Fledged Bluebirds**



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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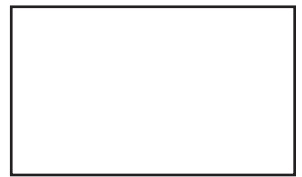
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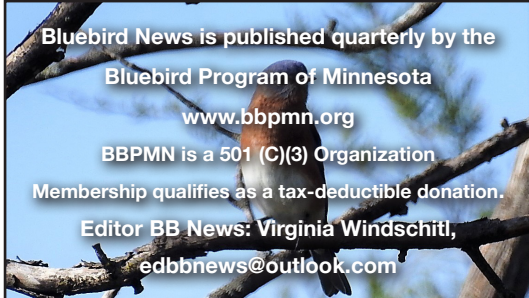


Photo by Doris Glander

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 20, 2026
Bald Eagle Day
Wabasha, MN

June 26-27, 2026
Loons & Lakes Festival
National Loon Center
Cross Lake, MN

June 25-July 2, 2026
Beginning Bird Banding 7-day Workshop
Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center
Finland, MN (\$2,835 includes food & lodging)

July 11
Bat Festival, 1-7 p.m.
Historic Forestville
Preston, MN

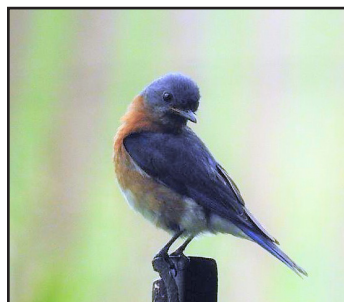
August 15, 2026
Henderson Hummingbird Hurrah, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

September 4-6, 2026
Rice County Steam & Gas Show
Our Bluebird trailer will be there again!

September 19, 2026
Bluebird Presentation
Gerten's Garden Center
Inver Grove Heights, 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."



Photos by Doris Glander

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