

A Call to Southeast Wisconsin Bluebirders

By Bob Tamm

As I recall, there was a time, albeit many years ago now, when I thought that the biggest obstacle to "bluebirding" in Southeast Wisconsin was lack of suitable nesting habitat for bluebirds. After all, when you think of this area of the state, you most likely think about freeways and traffic jams, big cities with lots of buildings and houses, and people – lots and lots of people! So where could we possibly find room for a bluebird box or two, much less a trail of ten, twenty, or more boxes???

Well, thanks to the benevolence of a few wealthy landowners of a bygone era, and the foresight of a few forward-thinking people in city and state government – yes, they DO at times make good decisions – to purchase open land and buy up available vacant farmlands, southeast Wisconsin does in fact have many very good to excellent bluebird nesting habitats. County Parks and Nature Preserves are relatively common in our area, and let's not forget golf courses. Where there are people, there are golf courses – and southeast Wisconsin has plenty of both. Golf courses are usually wonderful bluebird habitat!

So, over the years, I have gradually changed my thinking. The fact is that if I want to set up a bluebird trail and monitor it, the lack of suitable nesting habitat isn't really the issue. Good habitat is out there... waiting for a few boxes, and someone to do regular monitoring. Personally, I monitor five trails on a regular basis. Right now, I don't have room in my schedule to do much more than that. But I know there are new places out there, just waiting for good bluebird trails. But here is the kicker: **We can't establish trails here in Southeast Wisconsin if we don't have monitors who are willing to donate a few hours per week to monitor those trails!**

And that's where you good bluebirding folks come in... Somewhere out there I believe there are those of you who would like to expand on your bluebird production by having your very own trail to monitor. Or, perhaps be part of a small group who would like to share the "duties". If you are reading this, I know you already are aware of the joys of bluebirding... setting up boxes, waiting and hoping for bluebirds to pick your boxes to set up housekeeping, and watching the progress of the new tenants, from nestbuilding to fledging. It is a sense of satisfaction that you only can relate to if you have actually "been there and done that".

Be aware that BRAW-sponsored new trails are installed at little or no cost to you as the new monitor - boxes and mounts are available from BRAW, thanks to donations of time and money from our members.

Right now, I know of sites available – or soon to be available- for bluebird trails. But it does no good to install a trail on a golf course or natural area if we have no one to monitor it. And again, that is where YOU come in. If you live in the counties that are normally considered part of Southeastern Wisconsin, and would like to expand your bluebirding to include another trail or two, I would like to hear from you! You can call me or email me for more information. And if you can't get a hold of me, try my friends Kent Hall or Melissa Bruder. Any one of us would be happy to give you information on what is out there, and who knows, you could be looking forward to Spring just a little more in 2010, thanks to your very own new trail!

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