

Eastern Bluebirds Still Need Our Help

Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc. (BRAW)

In 1986, it was estimated that the Eastern Bluebird population in its historic range had declined by 90 % during the preceding 50 years. Loss of habitat, increased populations of predators such as house sparrows, European starlings and raccoons, and the loss of natural cavity nest sites contributed to the bluebirds' decline.

In an effort to reverse this trend, private citizens and the Department of Natural Resources organized BRAW, an independent non-profit organization of citizen scientists. With the use of man-made nest boxes, blue birders have been able to gradually increase the bluebirds' numbers.

Although many State and Canadian provinces have similar groups, BRAW is unique among them. Since its founding, BRAW has encouraged its members to participate in a unique nest box monitoring program. This program, in which about 20% of BRAW's members participate, involves the once-a-week collection of simple, but extremely useful data about nest box activity. BRAW asks its volunteers to report a summary of the data on the BRAW Easy Summary Form. People from all over Wisconsin file the reports each year. Based on those data, BRAW reports to all of its members/subscribers by means of its quarterly newsletter, *Wisconsin Bluebird*, the production of bluebird trails throughout Wisconsin.

The reported bluebird production in Wisconsin has increased from 5,000



Photos: Patrick Ready

since 1996. In 2012 monitors reported over 30,000 bluebirds fledged. This improvement resulted from changes in the selection of box types (from deep boxes to small, shallower boxes) and from changes in box management methods. Today, most Wisconsin monitors have switched away from the use of closely spaced boxes to widely spaced boxes (at least 100 yards apart).

There is more to be done. The annual fledge of about 22,000 bluebirds would be ideal but extreme winter weather down south has taken a toll the past few years. There is room for a lot more bluebirds.

BRAW coordinates its bluebird recovery program through workshops and meetings, press releases, web site, articles in publications, and its official quarterly newsletter, the *Wisconsin Bluebird*. BRAW also has an annual membership meeting, located in different parts of Wisconsin.

The network of BRAW County Coordinators may conduct local workshops each year, typically during the late winter and early spring. These resource people help individuals, clubs, and organiza-



tions to effectively aide in the effort of bluebird restoration.

BRAW subscribers/members provide BRAW's financial base, e.g. for the publication of the *Wisconsin Bluebird*, construction of nest boxes and more.

We invite you to join us and to be part of the bluebird recovery movement, wherever you live.

The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc. is a nonprofit organization incorporated under the laws of Wisconsin and is classified as a tax exempt, 501(c)(3) organization by the IRS. Subscription/Memberships and other contributions to BRAW, Inc. are tax deductible. BRAW is an all-volunteer organization.

Nest box plans, habitat, setting up a trail and membership info is at www.braw.org

