



41 Years

Spring 2026
Vol. 41, No. 1

Wisconsin Bluebird

Newsletter of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc.

BRAW is an affiliate member of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS), founded by Lawrence Zeleny.

2025 Nest Box Data Report

See Page 4



Patrick Ready

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Is It Time to Renew Your Membership?

President's Report

By Steve Sample

Our membership, YOU, are really a special group! All of us focus on saving native cavity nesters with a focus on bluebirds, of course! With the cost of everything to support bluebirds rising, a suggestion from our valued bookkeeper, Joanie Haugen, and our membership chairperson, Valerie Van Winkle, led to our asking membership to consider supporting BRAW during December's "Giving Tuesday." I suppose I should not be surprised as the response, for it was beyond expectations. A heartfelt thanks to all of you for donating. The funds will go directly to purchasing nesting boxes and hardware.

Tom Moser, one of our newest Board members, is heading a committee on trail building. Yes, this is new. This committee should be the contact for people interested in developing a new nest box trail and/or refreshing an old one, including the, very successful, "Nest in Peace" initiative. Contact Tom at tmoser83@gmail.com.

The new BRAW nesting box tags have been a resounding success, and we ran out of these tags quickly. New tags have been ordered, and they will be provided free of



charge to members. We do ask for shipping reimbursement. Of course, attaching these to your nesting boxes clearly shows that Your work is part of a larger statewide program. That said, if you wish to have business card laminates with your contact information instead or along with the tags, I still provide these at no cost as well.

If you have not submitted your 2025 nesting data to Steve Fallon, please do it soon. We need accurate totals for grant requests and to share with other organizations to have a clear picture as to the status of bluebird population and other native cavity nesters.

Many Wisconsin eastern bluebirds migrate to southern Texas. The weather in most of southern Texas has been usually cold. Let's hope this fact does not cause any mortality issues and so, let's be optimistic.

One last thing- our national organization, NABS or North American Bluebird Society, has asked our membership to join their organization as well. They are a good source of ideas and a means to see what others are doing with bluebirds around the country. It's worth considering. <https://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/>

Let's have a great year!

Steve

BRAW CC News

GENE BIRR, CC CHAIR

gbbird22@gmail.com.

We are all eagerly awaiting the upcoming arrival of our beloved bluebirds and the return of spring, as we continue to deal with the cold, ice and snow of winter. These conditions give us the time and opportunity to recall the successes we experienced on our trails last summer while we make plans for improvements we can make to benefit the bluebirds this year.

These include any presentations we have planned for this spring while we reach out to others who may be interested in attracting bluebirds to their properties.

Much of my time this winter was spent building a hundred NABS-style red cedar nest boxes which will be available to supply new bluebird trails this spring. Then when that supply of lumber was consumed, I reached out to a local sawmill, located just 2 miles down the road, where I purchased white cedar lumber that I had cut to my needed width measurements, enough to supply me building another hundred nestboxes in the upcoming year.

Following are the reports of several of our CCs who are describing what they will be doing this spring in antic-

ipation of the bluebirds return and educating those who are interested in providing nesting opportunities for them.

Ozaukee and Washington Counties, Mary Holleback

I received several pictures of bluebirds raiding a feeder in Mequon today. Glad they made it through the bitter cold weather we've had the past few days. Hope they make it through the winter!

We will be offering a "bluebird" workshop in March.

Title: **How to Attract Bluebirds (and other cavity nesters)**

When: Sat. March 7, 2026 from 1:00-2:30

Where: Riveredge Nature Center - visitor center

4458 County Road Y, Saukville, WI
Description:

Many spring migrants will soon be returning to our area looking for housing. Learn how to attract bluebirds and a wide variety of other cavity-nesting birds to your yard. We will discuss the pros and cons of different nest box styles and cover the basics of where to place them and how to maintain them. This workshop is meant for amateur and experienced bird lovers. Near the end of the pro-

gram we'll take a short walk on the bluebird trail to see how boxes should be mounted and placed so dress for the weather.

Please share the info with whomever you think might be interested.

Thanks!

Racine County, Rick Fare

I'm looking forward to another bluebird season. Hopefully all current monitors will be ready to again check their trails. I will be training a new person who will monitor 2 trails.

Soon I'll be contacting current monitors and plan on again visiting some of the trails to relocate and replace some of the worn boxes. I do have a nice supply of boxes for this.

The Racine Library recently contacted my Audubon Chapter (Hoy Audubon Society) to develop some nature-focused programming. As a result, I will be presenting a Bluebird program in June. It will be followed by a visit to one of our trails to see what being a monitor entails.

I will also be offering 2 bluebird presentations this Spring at Gateway Technical College in Kenosha and at the Seno Center in Burlington. The latter is one of the trips offered by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

Eau Claire County, Rita Gundry,

In late February, my brother, Larry Liegel, also a BRAW member, and I will be conducting a training session for the new monitors at Phillips Medisize Plant in Menomonie WI. They have a new bluebird trail on their campus. The session will deal mainly with steps to take when checking your bluebird nest boxes and the importance of weekly monitoring.

On another note, it seems there is an annual ice storm every year in the southern United States where bluebirds winter. We can expect some losses there. To minimize ones that occur here after they arrive due to cold temps, snow and ice, Larry tried this approach last year, especially with his nestboxes that are in Sauk County, about 150 miles away. He placed a berry-rich suet cake in areas of a few nestboxes, giving them something in case the weather is prohibitive for finding food. Knowing that, typically, bluebirds don't use feeders and birds of a different feather will feast on them as well, it's still something we can try. Last weekend, I made about 30 suet cakes, using beef fat, moisturized dried mealworms, sumac berries I harvested last fall, dried cranberries, currants, cornmeal, peanut butter, and sunflower hearts. Remembering a number of years ago when inclement weather arrived after bluebirds did, I opened a nestbox to check and inside were 3 dead male bluebirds, I expect from hypothermia and starvation. Has anyone else tried this method, or might you have a better suggestion?

Dane County, Patrick Ready

I saw my first bluebird of the year on January 1 while doing a Christmas Bird Count around Stoughton. There have been several reports of bluebirds wintering over in southern Wisconsin. Recently I saw 5 along the Wisconsin River in Sauk City. Friends have reported seeing small flocks in the UW Arboretum here in Madison. Bluebirds feed on seeds and berries when they winter over. Unfortunately invasive Buckthorn is a staple diet during the winter. I've seen Robins and Cedar Waxwings eating them as well.

Speaking of Robins I have seen them in my yard with this mid-February

winter thaw. Temps have been close to 60 degrees! Most snow has melted.

Soon I will do a trail check of my nest boxes so they are ready for the new nesting season. Any mice will be booted out!

Regarding feeding bluebirds in winter and early Spring. They will go to suet cakes that are soft and will eat sunflower chips off a tray feeder. Also freeze dried or live mealworms can bring them around. In sub-freezing temps put live mealworms in a dry heated birdbath. Bluebirds will respond to whistles, door noises etc. when you feed them on a regular schedule. Unlike many other feeder birds they don't typically sit at feeders for long. More of a "get and split" behavior. Also they love a clean birdbath!



Ruth Smith

Door County, Charlotte Lukes

I will give my program, STARTING AND MAINTAINING A BLUEBIRD TRAIL, at The Ridges Sanctuary for their annual nest box building workshop on Saturday, March 14th at 10 AM in Baileys Harbor, WI.

Pre-registration with The Ridges Sanctuary is necessary to be in the workshop. They have a web site to help registration, <https://ridgessanctuary.org>.

On another note, this weekend's massive ice and snow storm due to hit the south may cause the death of many bluebirds as that same type of event did five years ago.

In the 2021 nesting season we had 6 Black-capped Chickadee nests on our trail and fewer bluebirds that produced only 92 eggs with only 59 hatching.

We hardly ever have chickadees nesting, but they found empty boxes and used them! The following year was not much better.

We felt it took three years to get bluebird numbers back to normal.

Brown and Outagamie Counties

While watching yet another weather event in ice storms unfold across the southern states I can't help but wonder how the Bluebirds are doing. It was just February 2021 that the last major ice storms hit Texas and other Southern States. With climate change it seems these events are bound to become more prevalent. As we can only control what we can, it seems so important that we keep up the good work that BRAW and all its members are doing to promote our Bluebirds. A huge shout out of Thanks to all.

As the weather improves, I plan on walking my nest box trails to do needed maintenance on my nest boxes. I remember that some will need replacement because of poor roofs, and others will benefit from entrance hole baffles to fix enlarged entrance holes. I remember one that is missing a Van Ert trap screw – how did the sparrows know that last year? I plan to be ready for them in 2026. Prior to the return of nice weather, I plan to refurbish a pile of used nest boxes in the basement so they will be ready to use next spring.

I look forward to adding knoll guards on Wendy's refurbished trails on Grand View Golf Course and Whistlers Knoll Winery. Also to help if needed on a new trail that Gene Birr and I added to Unity Hospice in Brown County last fall. This trail is for Jim Kneiszel who is a volunteer at Unity.

Columbia County, Mark Martin

Our nest box program had 11 trails with 11 volunteer monitors and three Goose Pond interns monitoring a trail.

Vince Bertram earned his Eagle Scout rank by coordinating his troop from DeForest to build 50 more nest boxes with Noel predator guards. Funding for supplies came from our *Jill Martin Wildlife Endowment Fund*. Thanks and congratulations, Vince! The boxes are ready for replacement on our trails. We will be establishing a bluebird trail on 340 acres at our new Hillside Prairie Sanctuary near Cambridge in Dane County and also providing boxes to others.

Final Data Report for 2025

By Steve Fallon

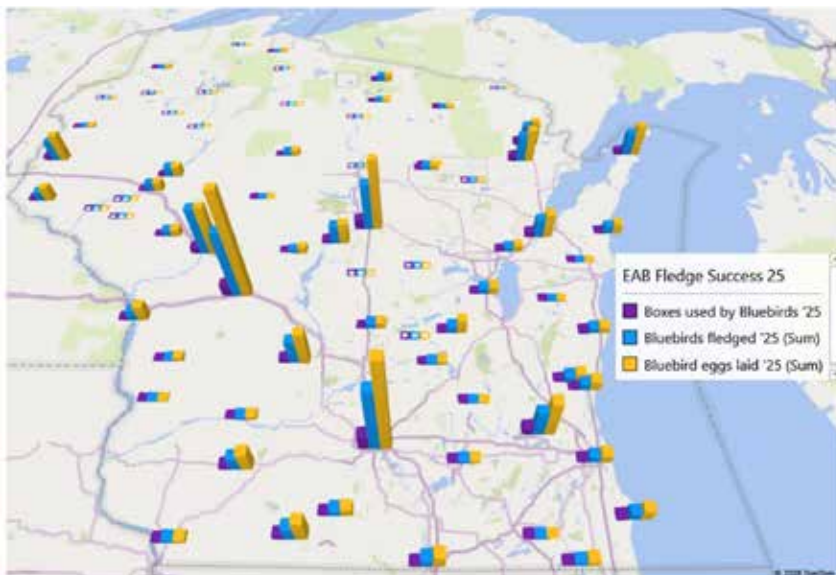
The final numbers for our 2025 bluebird fledglings have been compiled and the reports indicate about what could be called an “average” year. Our monitors reported 16,352 EAB fledglings for 2025 and that is about 7% lower than the number of birds fledged in 2024. As has become custom for this report, I plotted the data on maps to provide a graphic representation of the relative numbers from trails in the state based on county.

The first map shows the numbers of boxes used by bluebirds, eggs laid, and bluebirds ultimately fledged indicated by the height of the bars in the graph, with colors corresponding to the category in the legend.

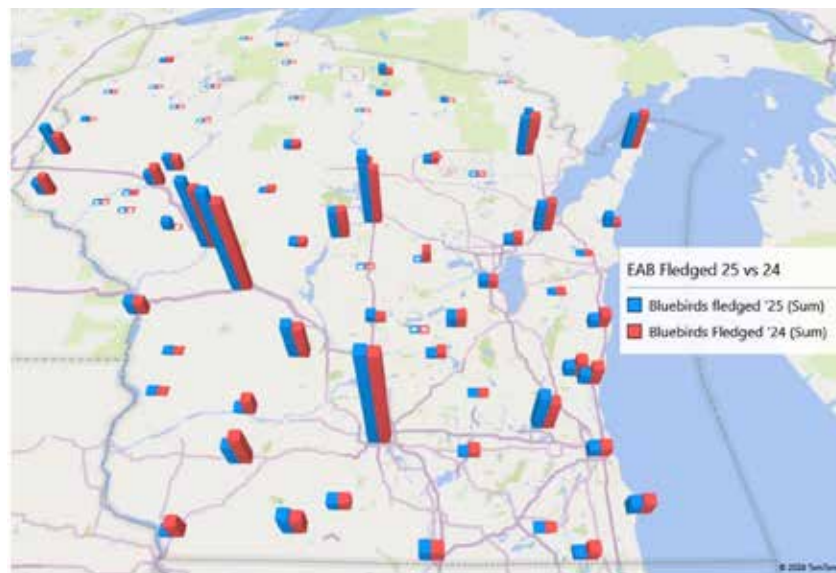
The next map shows a comparison of the 2025 fledged EAB numbers compared to the 2024 values. In many areas we saw similar numbers overall, with some increases and some decreases mostly due to weather issues and fewer boxes monitored. The cool, wet spring contributed to some of the problems observed as did some hot dry weather later in the year. So overall, we saw a slight decline, although it was considered an average year by many. In 2025, we had about 4.5% fewer boxes in play which contributed to the lower numbers overall.

The final plot is a pie chart that indicates the relative numbers of bluebirds compared to the other cavity nesters that share the bluebird boxes. These ratios are nearly the same as we’ve seen in past years and are heavily influenced by geography, predation and nestbox placement. The total number of all cavity nesters for 2025 was 28,784, which is about 9% below of the total number of cavity nesters we had in 2024. Tree swallow numbers were down nearly 19% and chickadee numbers were down 24% compared to the ‘24 numbers. The wren numbers showed a 7% increase and most likely contributed to the decrease in fledges of other cavity nesting species, as wrens are aggressive nest box competitors.

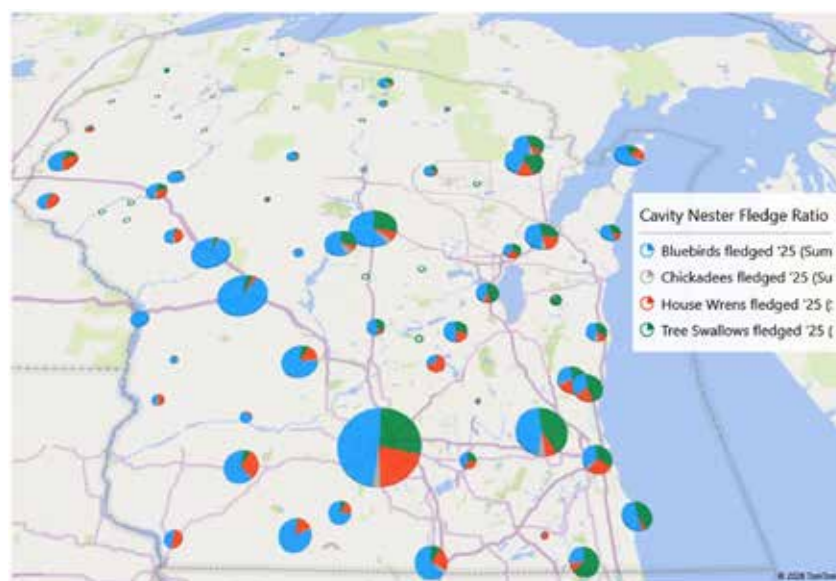
We want to recognize our monitors for their contributions on behalf of the birds. We had 340 reports from our monitors that yielded 16,352 bluebird fledglings. Your participation in this work is what keeps Wisconsin’s bluebird legacy alive and it inspires many to do the same. Newsletters from our organization are widely read and like the bluebirds are not confined to our borders. In fact, a faithful reader, John Clendinning from New Jersey, reported 3,124 EAB fledges from the nearly 500 boxes he monitors. Thanks one and all for your hard work and contributions! As always, please feel free to contact me with corrections or omissions.



Map 1



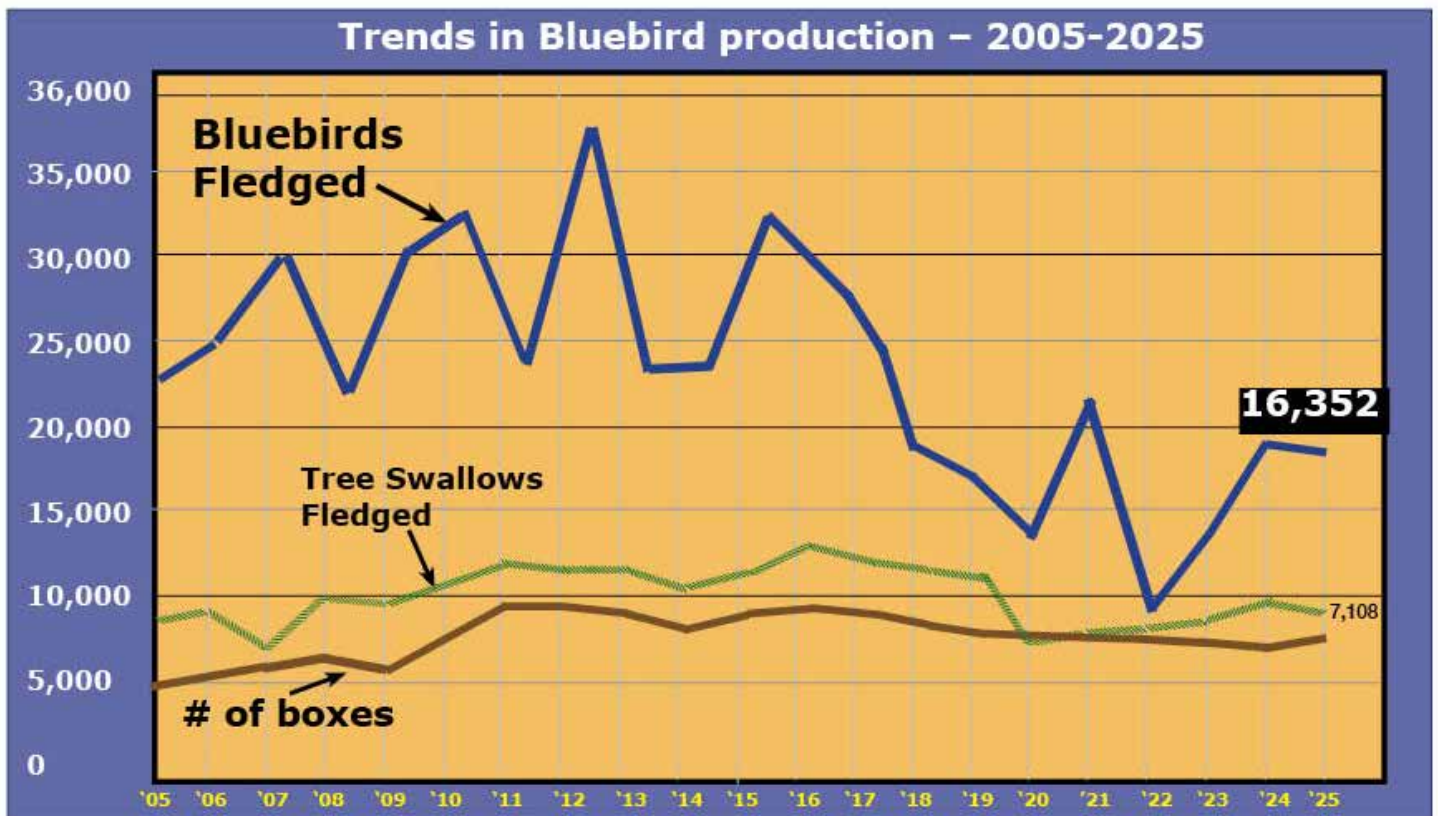
Map 2



Map 3

Name	Co.	BBs Fledged	Name	Co.	BBs Fledged	Name	Co.	BBs Fledged
Gene Birr	Brown	14	Paul Noeldner	Dane	5	Jay Brooks	Green	28
Della and Gerald Clabots	Brown	141	Carrie Portz	Dane		Reyne Phillips	Green	12
Sue Clairmont	Brown	12	Annie Powers	Dane	3	Eileen Bruno	Green	15
Beverly Greunke	Brown	7	Patrick Ready	Dane	66	Shelia McGuirk and Paul Manley	Iowa	13
Renee Heder	Brown	15	Ixchel Ripp	Dane	42	Brenna Budic	Iowa	10
Melissa Hoff	Brown	11	Deb Rohde	Dane		Karen Burkeland	Iowa	24
Kathy Krouse	Brown	27	Jack Saltes	Dane	7	Michelle Citron	Iowa	4
John Loehlein	Brown	11	Jack Saltes	Dane	57	Anne & Tim Connor	Iowa	16
Steve Mayer	Brown	41	Steve Sample	Dane	71	Laurie Derse	Iowa	16
Sally Riemer	Brown	8	Brian Schneider	Dane	4	Karl Heil	Iowa	8
Sue Smith	Brown	4	Lori Sheehan	Dane	92	Harry Hellen	Iowa	10
John Zillmer	Brown	10	Phillip Simon	Dane	14	Arlyne Johnson	Iowa	6
Stephen Zimmermann	Brown	48	Gail Smith	Dane	5	Gene Kroupa	Iowa	45
Naomi Moes	Brown	10	Mark Smith	Dane	2	Claudia Looze	Iowa	
Bob Ring	Calumet	8	Ruth Smith	Dane	9	Nicole McDonald	Iowa	50
Debbie Anderson	Chippewa	250	Mary Sobol	Dane	14	Patrick Michaels	Iowa	5
Joan Hoy	Chippewa		William Sonzogni	Dane	16	Bob Novy	Iowa	47
Paul Noeldner	Clark	10	Deb Turski	Dane		Eric Preston	Iowa	23
Jeanne and John Flickinger	Columbia	70	Gail Van Haren	Dane	66	Arabella Quinn	Iowa	5
Dennis Kirschbaum	Crawford	42	Kristine Vaughn	Dane	52	Daniel Roth	Iowa	
Donna Schmit and Alan Colvin	Dane	18	Wendy Vredenburg	Dane	9	Mike Shallow	Iowa	31
Kerry Beheler	Dane	9	Ann E S Wick	Dane	486	Steve Spaeni	Iowa	1
Kate Boran	Dane	9	Madison Christian Community	Dane	14	Lianne Stephenson	Iowa	10
Wendell Brookhyser	Dane	7	James Kronenberg	Dodge	10	Gail Van Haren	Iowa	57
Jay Brooks	Dane	64	Barbie Allen	Door	10	Susan Webb	Iowa	7
Nansi Jo Colley	Dane	26	Nick Anderson	Door	33	Mary Wepking	Iowa	12
Laura Cominetti	Dane	98	Marjorie Andrae	Door	22	Triska Beam	Jackson	117
Rainer Dronzek	Dane	47	Beth Bartoli	Door	18	Larry Casper	Jackson	154
Sue Eagle	Dane	44	Kelly Bockhop	Door	22	Aanika Casper	Jackson	9
Stephen Fallon	Dane	9	Chuck DiVerde	Door	4	Darrel Eberhardt	Jackson	817
Stephen Fallon	Dane	4	Cathy Eckers	Door	10	Jane Prindle	Jackson	8
Jill Feldkamp	Dane	10	Sarah Freyman	Door	10	Kim Schliebe	Jackson	127
Tim Frank	Dane	64	Marilyn Hansotia	Door	7	Tammy Frey	Jefferson	30
Jon Frohling	Dane	19	Mark Holey	Door	4	Gerald Gerndt	Jefferson	38
Donna Garske	Dane	9	Wendy Lukes	Door	36	Richard Kilmer	Juneau	
Peggy Gierhart	Dane	8	Charlotte Lukes	Door	86	Nancy Lally	Juneau	13
Patrick Handrick	Dane	34	Sandy and Ed Miller	Door	17	Stan Parsons	Juneau	62
Patrick Hasburgh	Dane	9	Ken & Signe Onsrud	Door	246	Andrew Ringquest	Juneau	9
Joanie Haugen	Dane	55	Sherry Seubert	Door	9	Ron Cascarano	Kenosha	9
Lynne Haynor	Dane	3	Carl and Darcy Wallace	Door	9	Ruth Dickinson	Kenosha	50
Pam Heilman	Dane	17	Eric Wickstrom	Door	56	Anna Hudson	Kenosha	14
John Hurd	Dane	8	Charles Bergsten	Door	22	Krerowicz Rosenstiel	Kenosha	29
Joan Jacobsen	Dane		Rita Gundry	Douglas	22	Julie Milligan-Barr	Kenosha	3
Marianne Jensen	Dane	47	Bernie Hoefgen	Eau Claire	75	Barbie Allen	Kewaunee	32
Sally Keyel	Dane	22	Joan Hoy	Eau Claire	21	Don Pritzl	Kewaunee	132
Deb Knudsen	Dane	13	Laurence Liegel	Eau Claire	12	Glenn Smith	Kewaunee	43
Gene Kroupa	Dane	2	Martina Lindseth	Eau Claire	91	Dan Henderson	La Crosse	51
Joann Laufenberg	Dane	12	Memuna Khan	Eau Claire	20	Allen Herbers	La Crosse	165
Nate Lawrence	Dane	2	Karen Kinziger	Fond du Lac	171	Scott Kinninger	La Crosse	29
David Lucey	Dane	139	Dorothy Messner	Fond du Lac	11	James Barth	Lafayette	247
James Mand	Dane		Karen McMillion	Fond du Lac	23	Ginny Bean	Lafayette	24
Sylvia Marek	Dane	26	Becky Fernette	Forest	25	Jennifer Filipiak	Lafayette	10
Bruce and Ruth Marion	Dane	5	Diane Morgan	Grant	8	Jim Hess	Lafayette	105
Guy Martin	Dane	31	Jerry Skalak	Grant	53	Julianne McGuire	Lafayette	9
Kitas McKnight	Dane	8	Rodney Courtier	Grant	16	Dale and Doris Moody	Lafayette	35
Lynn Messinger	Dane	5	Kathleen Dreikosen	Green	28	Steven Wang	Lafayette	
			Rich Horbaczewski and Jackie Gennett	Green	78	Lynn & Joe Barrett	Langlade	9
					35	Karen Koebel	Manitowoc	4

Name	Co.	BBs Fledged	Name	Co.	BBs Fledged	Name	Co.	BBs Fledged
Timothy Comer	Marinette	44	Dave and Patti Becker	Portage	79	Pat and Steve Cox	St. Croix	10
Gerry Giese	Marinette	33	Lisa Bey	Portage	28	Kathy Fredrickson	St. Croix	5
Krystyna Mazur	Marinette	9	Brad Branwell	Portage	117	Jim Higgins	St. Croix	75
Gary Riggle	Marinette		Mary Bratz &			Julie Irwin	St. Croix	18
Tony Sailer	Marinette	9	Dick Stephens	Portage	127	Pauline Jauquet	St. Croix	14
Barbie Allen	Marinette	422	Wendy Carlson	Portage	93	Stanley King	St. Croix	36
Daryl Christensen	Marquette	132	Alice Chaney and			Lowell Peterson	St. Croix	129
Lynn Crawford	Milwaukee	21	Melba Carey	Portage	135	Debby Walters	St. Croix	37
Michelle Mellencamp	Milwaukee	60	Dean Hodsdon	Portage		Paul Wenzel	St. Croix	83
Justine and			Darlene & Jim Jakusz	Portage	93	Jim & Lori Livingston	Taylor	13
Matt Miller/Plummer	Milwaukee	19	Jean Klein	Portage	25	Dwight Offord	Taylor	103
Tom Moser	Milwaukee	26	David Lamb	Portage	25	Steve Banicki	Trempealeau	165
Alan Sherkow	Milwaukee	42	Michael Moore	Portage	131	Michael Everson	Vernon	10
Laurie Barthowomew	Monroe	134	Joe Schultz	Portage	72	Bill LeClaire	Vernon	27
Bruce & Jerrilyn Brewer	Monroe	280	Bill and Janice Seybold	Portage	88	Robert Butzer	Vilas34	
Jeff and Abby Duebler	Monroe	177	Janet Smith	Portage	5	Greg Olson	Vilas135	
Warren & Janet Evans	Monroe	137	Carla Struble	Portage	70	Mike & Jean Curran	Walworth	3
Michael Helgren	Monroe	132	Bill and Jill Ziehr	Portage	93	Ralph Konrath	Walworth	5
Bartholomew Laurie	Monroe	134	Katie Kozak	Portage	63	Susan Crowley	Washington	35
Cathy Malzacher	Monroe	186	Sara Fare	Racine	63	Ray Pinter	Washington	118
Gretchen Reis	Monroe	12	Rick Fare	Racine	94	Dee Freeman	Washington	22
Gordon Weber	Monroe	475	Tom & Karen Gavahan	Racine	15	Bridie Fanning	Waukesha	7
Gordon Weber	Monroe	100	Chris Glass	Racine	9	Keith Feind	Waukesha	14
Barbie Allen	Oconto	131	Chris Glass	Racine	26	Dennis Fletcher	Waukesha	14
Joann Altergott	Oconto	45	Christopher Jamieson	Racine	13	Kate Gorde &		
Virginia A. Behrend	Oconto	10	Barbara Nelson	Racine	11	Norm Hausser	Waukesha	91
Gene Birr	Oconto	249	Susan Dvorak	Richland	8	Don & Debbie Herrick	Waukesha	100
James & Cathy Carnes	Oconto	7	Sue & Dan Johnson	Richland	24	Walter Jost	Waukesha	71
Sue Clairmont	Oconto	5	Debbie Pavick	Richland	41	Shari Kastner	Waukesha	39
Don Denor	Oconto	9	Jim Brase	Rock	5	Shari Kastner	Waukesha	8
Don Denor	Oconto	4	Rodney Courtier	Rock	180	Shari Kastner	Waukesha	21
Don Denor	Oconto	5	Stephen Fallon	Rock	27	Mark Kastner	Waukesha	13
Kathleen Drews	Oconto	10	Michael Johnson	Rock	98	Ralph Konrath	Waukesha	2
Gerald Gerndt	Oconto	54	Jim & Cindy Schwinson	Rock	5	Ilene and		
Gerald Gerndt	Oconto	50	Jeremy &			Paul Kronschnabel	Waukesha	69
Gerald Gerndt	Oconto	36	Margaret Batson	Sauk	24	Allen Rosenthal	Waukesha	4
Kristen Laufenberg	Oconto	25	Kathleen Hawkins	Sauk	3	Judy Salus	Waukesha	31
Kristen Laufenberg	Oconto	14	Susan Kenney	Sauk	38	Paula Stich	Waukesha	17
Chantel McLoued	Oconto	4	Evonne Kraemer	Sauk	187	Karl Timm	Waukesha	84
Len Mihalski	Oconto	8	Gene Kroupa	Sauk	12	Steve Vidmar	Waukesha	36
Greg Miller	Oconto	9	Colleen Lewis	Sauk	5	Melissa Bruder	Waukesha	90
Ray Mathey	Oneida	3	Ursula Muehlelehner	Sauk	8	Patrick Enright	Waupaca	44
Greg Olson	Oneida	59	Renee Pierce	Sauk		Dennis Kaminski	Waupaca	45
Wendy Bekx	Outagamie	10	Wood Weller	Sauk	6	Mary Naylor	Waupaca	81
Steve Mayer	Outagamie	76	Paul Zillgitt	Sauk	26	David Misterek	Winnebago	93
Steve Schleitwiler	Outagamie	4	Laurence Liegel	Sauk	231	Ryan Walter	Winnebago	81
Daniel Schultz	Outagamie	18	Bruce and Ruth Marion	Sauk	118	Tom and Gayle Bartelt	Wood	126
Richard Albert	Ozaukee	20	Ruthann Meiers	Shawano	116	Fred Camacho	Wood	86
Ben Arnold	Ozaukee	29	Robyn Jacobchick	Sheboygan	10	Betty Dieckhoff	Wood	14
Mary Holleback	Ozaukee	40	Ellen Klusmeier	Sheboygan	12	Karen Haralson	Wood	70
Ellen Lafouge	Ozaukee	88	LuAnn Maratik	Sheboygan	21	Kim Marshall	Wood	40
Trevor Mihalski	Ozaukee	13	Janet & Andy Raddatz	Sheboygan	39	Mike Moran	Wood	139
Albert Richard	Ozaukee		Barb Schaefer	Sheboygan	10	Ruby Thomas	Wood	27
Molly Ticcioni	Ozaukee	10	Therese Wilk	Sheboygan	52			
Jim and Dorothy Beix	Pierce	131	Jim and Dorothy Beix	St. Croix	27	Total	16352	
Pauline Jauquet	Pierce	40	Cathryn Burns	St. Croix	4			
Mark Ritzinger	Pierce	38	Jim Wolf	St. Croix	58			
Ernie Schultz	Pierce	29	St Anne's School					
Jim Higgins	Polk 32		4th Grade	St. Croix	12			



*Number of fledgling Eastern Bluebirds & Tree Swallows, and number of active nest-boxes, in the 2005 to 2025 time period.

Spring 2026 Donations

Beth Clabots, \$10
 Andrew Milner, \$250
 Paul Stencel, \$30
 Tim Frank, \$100
 William Lehner, \$100
 Patrick Hermsen, \$1000
 Nancy Jones, \$10
 Naomi Jenkins, \$40
 Colleen Lewis, \$125
 Wendy Bekx, \$25
 Deborah Turski, \$220
 Nicholas Traxler, \$25
 Ann Mader, \$100
 Nathan Robertson, \$100
 Ed and Evonne Curran, \$25
 Jill Gaskell, \$50
 Joe Schultz, \$100
 Jim Van Dreesse, \$100
 Dave Gugger, \$100
 Bill Prue, \$100
 Laurence Liegel, \$25 research, \$50 nest box
 Susan Dvorak, \$100
 Donald Persons, \$100
 Timothy Freeman, \$100
 Christopher Jamieson, \$25
 Jeffrey Rusinow, \$250
 Duane Schwab, \$200
 Jerome and Sharon Woelfel, \$150 nest box

Judy and Paul Kolosso, \$25
 Janna Soerens, \$25
 Frank Bradley, \$20 nest box
 Sally Riemer, \$25 nest box
 Bonnie Hamer, \$25
 Michael Everson, \$20
 Hubert Cole, \$50
 Edward Miller, \$300 research
 Walter Kugler, Jr., \$5
 Charles Zarnoth, \$56
 Jerry and Julie Skalak, \$25 nest box
 Robert Novy, \$100
 Ryan Walter, \$30
 Donna Garske, \$50
 Clintonville Riverside Golf Course, \$50
 Dennis Kirschbaum, \$20
 Jack Saltes, \$100
 Walter Jost, \$25
 Richard Butusov, \$10
 Sherry Seubert, \$10
 Carrie and Dave Richard, \$5
 Rita Gundry, \$75 nest box and research
 Beatrice Manthe, \$25 nest box
 Jessica Kaehne, \$30 nest box
 Richard Albert, \$100 nest box
 Loren and Brenda Baldwin, \$25
 In Memory of Theresa Burns
 Nicky McDonald, \$100



KEY STAT ABOUT BLUEBIRDS

Eastern Bluebirds occur across eastern North America and south as far as Nicaragua. Birds that live farther north and in the west of the range tend to lay more eggs than eastern and southern birds.

The oldest recorded Eastern Bluebird was at least 10 years, 6 months old. It had been banded in New York in May 1989, and was found dead in South Carolina November 1999.



Bluebird Box Considerations

By Dave Lucey

The mission of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin is to fledge as many bluebirds as possible in our state. A key to this success is to provide suitable boxes that optimize the survival of the eggs laid in them. Based on our research and community successes, we believe the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) boxes (see photo) are of the best design to achieve this goal. The Board of Directors of BRAW recently adopted construction guidelines that can provide assistance to builders or buyers of boxes.

- Materials – boxes should be made of solid wood of $\frac{3}{4}$ " thickness or more. Cedar and pine work best, with redwood and other untreated woods acceptable. All pieces should be held together with rust resistant wood screws, with Phillips or Torx drive heads. No coatings, such as paint or stain should be applied.

- Dimensions – boxes need to have interior dimensions of 4" x 5" x 7" high. Variations of up to 1" are acceptable. The access hole must be a diameter of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", or a 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ " diameter hole elongated to no more than 2".

- Construction – the top must be sloped at least 10 degrees and project over the front by at least 3 inches and over the sides by at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " to prevent rain entry. The bottom should be recessed by at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " to prevent water from wicking up and wetting the nest. Right handed people will find it more comfortable to have the right side panel swing open (when facing the box). It works best to have it open downward for easy monitoring and cleaning. It should be held closed with nail, screw or other suitable method. A method of venting the box must be provided

that can be easily opened or closed as the weather requires. A small screw should be installed inside the box below the entry hole to accept a Van Ert house sparrow trap. The box should accept clamps or u-bolts for easy attachment to a metal post.

Boxes that have these properties will provide bluebirds with the best possible shelter as they take care of their young.



Spring 2026 New Members

Jim Miller and Mary Olson, MN
Paule Stich, Brookfield
Madalynn Nicole, Waukesha
Nicky McDonald, Mineral Point
Peggy Ore, West Bend
Eileen Lurvey, Oconomowoc
Gail Chapman, IL
Jay Utley, Reedsburg
LMurray Design, Delafield
Nick Upthall, Madison
Mary Zimmerman, Middleton
Mark Stuve, Independence
Beatrice Manthe, Madison
Jessica Kaehne, Allenton
Julie Hayden, Eau Claire
Jason Gerdes, Fontana
Jim Herro, Hartland
Cindy Duerkop, Westfield
Brian Orland, Cross Plains
Nell Cummings, Marshall
Pat Fischer, Neenah

Brian & Dawn DeMaster, Cedar Grove
Kim and Debra Randall, Whitehall
Melinda Bailey, Madison
Vicki Sokolowski, Ladysmith
Teresa Adams, Middleton
Kathy Larson, Brooklyn
David Reed, Clear Lake
Dennis Jahnke, Markesan
John Higgins, Mequon
Annette King, Oneida
Jared Fero, Waukesha
Stephanie Thompson, Lake Mills
Melissa Mauer-Ford, Green Bay
Robert Meyer, Fort Atkinson
Kevin Castro, Janesville
Robert Kresnak, Ixonia
Rachel Kittell, Madison
Lori Monday, Madison
Vick Hanson, Beloit
Samatha Frei, Argyle

Karina Ramos, Waunakee
Pat Horkan, Portage
Jess Ormonde, Fitchburg
Arthur Ircink, Shorewood
Lucy Danforth, Viroqua
Laura Anderson, River Falls
Lisa Schwarz, Prairie du Sac
Steve Ihrcke, Cedarburg
Dave and Dorothy Wollersheim, Fond du Lac
Barry Bakalik, Mauston
Carrie Czerwinka, Blanchardville
Taz and Julie Noble, Warrens
Sandy Rickey, Dodgeville
Dave McCabe, Beloit
Kathy Golz, Helenville
Lori Miller, Waupaca
Emily Meurer, Madison
Sage McConnell, Madison
Christine Gibb, Wisconsin Dells

Bluebirding Tips: Dealing With Woodpeckers

By Gene Kroupa

Over the years most of the damage caused to my nest boxes by woodpeckers has involved widening the entrance hole. But last fall an enterprising bird opened a brand-new hole in the side of one of my boxes in Iowa County.

My thought is that a woodpecker planned on using the nest box for winter roosting purposes. Come spring it's possible the woodpecker would compete with bluebirds for nesting rights.

Wisconsin woodpeckers come in various sizes and colors. One thing they seem to have in common is being attracted to bluebird nest boxes. The older the better.

Bluebirders must deal mostly with the Downy, Hairy, Red-Headed, Red Bellied, Northern Flicker and Yellow-Bellied woodpeckers. The Pileated, Black-Backed and American Three-Toed woodpeckers aren't usually a threat due to their habitat preferences or size.

I suspect the culprit that chiseled the hole in my nest box was probably a Downy Woodpecker just based on the size of the opening – about 1.5 inches in diameter. However, the slightly larger Hairy Woodpecker could have done the job, too.

Red-Headed and Red-Bellied woodpeckers are also found in southern Wisconsin where the damaged nest box is located. They are medium sized and often open-up existing cavities in trees for nesting sites. Yellow-Bellied Woodpeckers live primarily in the northern and central parts of Wisconsin where they inhabit mixed forests, coniferous forests, and wooded areas near lakes and rivers.

The American Three-Toed Woodpecker is found in central and northern Wisconsin. Known for having one less toe per foot, it inhabits remote and less disturbed areas with extensive coniferous forests. Look for its distinctive feeding holes on tree trunks.

The Black-Backed Woodpecker prefers burned over areas or recently



Downy Woodpeckers are common throughout Wisconsin. (Michael Topp, Cornell Lab of Ornithology / Macaulay Library)

disturbed coniferous forests, mainly in the northern part of the state. The Northern Flicker is one of the larger woodpeckers found throughout Wisconsin. It favors mixed habitats that include open areas with trees, such as parks, fields, and residential neighborhoods. There the flicker can forage on stumps and the ground for insects.

Pileated woodpeckers like the big woods with a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees. They often excavate large rectangular cavities in search of insects or to create nesting sites. I enjoy listening to their loud cuck-cuk-

cuk-cuk-cuk calls, rising and then falling in pitch and volume, but I don't worry much about their attacking my nest boxes.

So, what to do when woodpeckers become a nuisance? Being proactive might be the answer. I believe that putting a narrow hardware cloth predator guard on a nest box makes chipping away around the opening more difficult.

Adding a hole protector plate (available from BRAW) will thwart even the most determined and hard-headed woodpecker. But when woodpeckers slip in through the entrance hole and knock out a new one, about the only option left is to cover it if you choose this solution. I chose to do nothing. After all, woodpeckers are cavity nesters, and I like them almost as much as bluebirds – almost!



Use a protector plate to cover entrance hole and prevent further damage. (Steve Fallon)



Most likely a Downy Woodpecker seeking to create a roosting shelter entrance cut this hole. (Gene Kroupa)

UW Arboretum Hosts Bluebirds

By Gene Kroupa

Over its nearly 100-year history, the University of Wisconsin Arboretum on Madison's westside has seen many changes. The 1,200-acre preserve is best known for its springtime flowering flush of crabapple trees and lilac bushes.

A large part of the arboretum's mission is to serve as a research property and education hub. Maintaining a bluebird trail in the arboretum fulfills both purposes.

While crowds visit to view the diversity of plants and use its 17 miles of hiking trails, Sylvia Marek, of Madison, quietly tends her bluebird nest box trail like she's been doing for 38 years.

In 1988, Marek installed the first nine bluebird nest boxes in the Longenecker Horticultural Gardens, and she has been managing the trail ever since then. "The effort continues to be a part of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin's (BRAW) program to sustain the once declining population of these cavity nesters," noted Marek.

"My 18-nest box trail has served as a testing ground for various nest box designs," Marek. "We've tried different styles and have settled on the North American Bluebird Society's (NABS) model." BRAW supplied the nest boxes most recently used to refresh her trail.

"To protect against predators, all of my nest boxes are equipped with the Dave Lucey designed guard," said Marek. They are narrower and have a wooden landing ramp.

Throughout the year, thousands of people visit the Arboretum. "The large number of people using the grounds and seeing the nest boxes, as well as the bluebirds, is a wonderful public awareness opportunity," said Marek. "While we don't want folks to get too close to or open the nest boxes, they can still observe what's going on from a short distance away."

One thing Marek has learned is that folks are curious and many times they have children along with them. "If we are checking nest boxes or cleaning them out, Nansi or I can explain what

Wisconsin Bluebird



Sylvia Marek (l.) and Nansi Colley (r.) check an Arboretum bluebird nest box.



It all starts with a clutch of bluebird eggs in a fine grass nest. (Nansi Colley)



Newly hatched bluebird chicks ask parents for food. (Nansi Colley)

we're doing."

Nansi Colley is an Emerita Professor in the School of Medicine & Public Health at the UW-Madison. She has been monitoring and maintaining the trail with Marek since 2023. "Nansi is very knowledgeable, committed and loves bluebirds," noted Marek. She is also a first-rate photographer and scientist who records nest box activity.

With so much firsthand experience in hosting bluebirds, it's natural that Marek and Colley would share this information. Part of the education effort includes classes taught each spring in the visitor center.

Completed in 2001, the visitor center's 16,000 sq. ft. expansion supports multiple programs. In the spring, Marek teaches a class about *Bluebirds and the Arboretum Trail* at the center.

In the classroom, participants learn about bluebirds' nesting cycle, providing housing for them, maintaining



A bluebird nestling gets ready to leave the nest. (Nansi Colley)

and monitoring a trail. Then they go outside to walk and learn from Marek's trail. "What a thrill it is to hear the first sweet warbles in March, and to open a nest box in April to see four or five light blue eggs cradled in a nest of fine grass," Marek noted.

An ongoing research element Marek and Colley are conscientious about is recording nesting data during their



A magnolia tree blooms in the Longenecker Horticultural Gardens at the UW-Madison Arboretum. (Bryce Richter / UW-Madison)

weekly monitoring visits to the nest boxes. They track key variables like which species are using a nest box, how many eggs are laid, how many hatch, and ultimately the number of nestlings that successfully fledge.

"Helping bluebirds make a comeback involves a commitment to monitoring a trail, keeping records, becoming aware of recent recommendations, and a willingness to accept changes," noted Marek.

The collected data are shared with the Arboretum research team and BRAW for its annual report about the season's nesting results. BRAW combines the UW Arboretum's nest box data with that from nearly 7,000 nest boxes statewide for analysis purposes.

"We use the data to improve the productivity of our trail," said Marek. For example, boxes are moved if they aren't used for a year or two, or if House Wrens' become a problem. Switching to narrow metal conduit mounting poles from wide irrigation pipe was a big improvement.

Marek and Colley remove Tree Swallow nests after the young have fledged. Bluebirds often start a first or second brood once the Tree Swallows are gone.

Over the years, Marek's goal has remained the same: "My hope is to educate people to increase their understanding and love of bluebirds and the natural world we live in. To look into the eyes of a baby bluebird, watch it grow, and finally fledge is amazing.

Then to observe the faces of visitors who see a bluebird for the first or tenth time, these are the rewards for my commitment to the restoration of bluebirds," concluded Marek.



Free Replacement Nest Boxes Available

By Gene Kroupa

Even though they might not look as bad as those shown here, you still could have nest boxes that are beyond repair. If the roof leaks and sides let cold winds blow through, it's time to replace.

Thanks to funds received via "Giving Bluesday" and other donations, BRAW is offering free replacement nest boxes to

members living in Wisconsin.

Limit is three while the supply lasts. You must be a BRAW member as of February 1st to qualify.

Each nest box will include mounting clamps and a blue plastic BRAW ID tag. Nest boxes can be picked up for free or shipped to you for a \$20 total flat fee. Additional donations are welcomed. No online requests are being taken. Requests must be postmarked no later than May 15th.

Your written request

should include: Number of boxes wanted (up to 3), BRAW member's name, home address, phone number and e-mail address. Mail your request for nest boxes and include a check for \$20 to cover shipping (if needed) made out to:

BRAW
PO Box 628492
Middleton, WI 53562

Please be patient as it takes time for BRAW volunteers to process the orders.



Nest boxes come with a blue plastic BRAW ID tag. (Gene Kroupa)



David Peterson, of Madison, puts mounting clamps on BRAW replacement boxes. (Gene Kroupa)

Observations of Wintering Bluebirds

By Curt and Arlys Caslavka, Middleton, Wisconsin

During the recent extremely cold weather a group of Eastern Bluebirds has been roosting nightly in our front yard Peterson bird house. We first noticed their presence early on Jan 21st about 7AM while looking out a front window and were completely surprised to see seven bluebirds fly out of our bluebird house. It was still fairly dark at that time on a cloudy day. The bluebirds were gone all day, presumably feeding somewhere in the neighborhood. At this time of year our property has no shrubs bearing winter fruits for them to feed on.



Photo by Curt Caslavka on January 22nd.

At approximately 4PM that same day several bluebirds had returned to our yard. For the next forty five minutes they repeatedly flew into and then back out of the nest box before finally settling in for the night just before it got dark. We were unable to get an accurate count.

(Day two Jan 22nd) our intentions were to observe the bluebirds leaving their roost but we misjudged the time. Later that afternoon around 4PM the birds returned and Curt was ready with his camera. Again we were not certain how many birds were roosting that evening in the bird house and were concerned they might be in trouble with the extremely cold temperatures that night.

(Day three Jan 23rd) The low was -19 degrees with a wind chill of about -40 degrees - VERY COLD! We started observations at 6:45 AM and shortly thereafter eight bluebirds flew out of the box. They had survived the night and were off again. During the day Curt bought some dried mealworms and attached a feeder to the side of the bird house. He also plugged all of the air vents on the box and put a couple handfuls of pine shavings inside the box. Later when the bluebirds returned some of them started feeding on the mealworms before entering their roost for the night.

(Day four Jan 24th). The low that morning was minus 15 degrees and calm. Between 7:00 AM and 7:10AM six bluebirds exited the nesting box but returned several times to feed on the mealworms. Later Curt checked to see if there were any casualties in the roost and fortunately there were none.

Use the Van Ert Trap to Solve Your House Sparrow Problems



Install the trap and set it per instructions. Watch to see if you catch a House Sparrow or return to the box after a short time to check to see if the trap was sprung. You don't want to trap a bluebird and leave it trapped. To check caught bird use a large, clear plastic bag over the box and slightly open the side. The trapped bird will fly to the top of the bag for you to see what you have. Release bluebirds and remove House Sparrows.

Figure1–Installation is quick and simple provided there is a screw intact.



Figure 2– The visible red bullseye invariably suggests a trapped House Sparrow.

Order traps online from
Van Ert Enterprises at: vanerttraps.com



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MISSION:

To engage in such educational, scientific and charitable pursuits as may be beneficial to the prosperity and well being of the three species of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting bird species.

PBS Wisconsin Garden and Green Living Expo

Once again BRAW had a large booth at the PBS Garden and Green Living Expo. We gave two seminars on *Attracting Eastern Bluebirds & Other Cavity Nesters* to Your Yard presented by Teve Sample. Volunteers at the booth sold nest boxes and a few pamphlets and signed up new members.

Thanks to all the volunteers that helped BRAW spread the word about bluebird conservation in the state of Wisconsin.



Bluebird chick development

- first 15 days

by Jack Bartholmai

When chicks first hatch, they are naked, eyes are closed and they barely can raise their head but they are able to open their mouths to be fed. It takes about 5 days before they start to grow enough feathers to warm themselves. Until then they need to be brooded by the female. Between the 5th and 10th day the chicks are most vulnerable to cold temperatures. If they get too chilled and listless, they won't raise their heads when the adult birds bring them food and may starve. Both adults may stop feeding them and abandon the nest if they don't respond. In Wisconsin it is best to close vents in boxes during the early Spring to prevent chicks from getting too cold. As warmer summer temps set in then vents can be opened to prevent overheating the young. Monitoring should stop after the 12th day to prevent premature fledging. Normally by the 18-20th day they are fledged.



Membership Renewal Information

By Valerie Van Winkle, Membership Services

If the address label on your *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter shows "Spring 2026" next to your name, your membership is set to expire this month. To continue receiving the newsletter, please renew your membership immediately. Online members should note that this expiration clue does not appear on digital subscriptions, so it is recommended to mark your expiration date on your calendar at the time of sign-up. We want to ensure you don't miss any newsletters.

The upcoming edition of the *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter will begin production in May and will be mailed out in June. Memberships submitted after May 15 may not be processed in time for you to receive the Spring newsletter. If you are interested in a longer commitment, consider an extended membership or a one-time \$300 Life Membership.

Please fill out the membership renewal form on this page and send it with your check or money order to: **BRAW, Inc., Valerie Van Winkle, PO Box 628492, Middleton, WI 53562**

You can also renew your membership at www.braw.org and use PayPal or a credit card.

BRAW, Inc. Membership and Wisconsin Bluebird Subscription

Yes! I would like to join or renew as a member with the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc. (BRAW) and receive its quarterly newsletter *Wisconsin Bluebird*. Enclosed is my check/money order (do not send cash) made out to BRAW, Inc. for the following:

- ☐ \$10 Gift Annual Membership (Online subscription)
- ☐ \$15 Student/Teacher Annual Membership (Online subscription)
- ☐ \$20 Online Annual Membership
- ☐ \$40 Extended Online Annual Membership for 2 years
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*BRAW sends out nest box deal promotions and "time to renew" reminders via email.

Donation (optional)

☐ \$15 for nest box construction/post & predator guard

☐ \$100 for nest box trail

☐ \$_____ for bluebird research

☐ In addition to my membership dues, I wish to contribute: \$_____

(Contributions to BRAW are tax deductible.)

Check appropriate boxes:

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☐ This is a new membership.

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Enclosed please find my check \$ _____

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Valerie Van Winkle

PO Box 628492

Middleton, WI 53562

We do not share or sell BRAW's membership list.

If you have any questions, please contact Valerie at 847-302-5684 or ripvws@gmail.com.

BRAW ELECTED & APPOINTED OFFICERS

President Steve Sample, 422 Shepard Ter., Madison, WI 53705
708/606-8070 • ssample@gmail.com (term to 12/25)

Vice-president Brad Branwell-Zinda, Stevens Point, WI 54481 • brad.zinda@gmail.com (term to 12/25)

Secretary Gene Kroupa, gkroupa@tds.net (term to 12/25)

Director Tom Moser, Brookfield, WI 53045 tmoser83@gmail.com
(term to 12/26)

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stevefall50@gmail.com (term to 12/25)

Director Dave Lucey, Cross Plains, WI • dklucy@chorus.net
(term to 12/26)

Director Mary Sobol, McFarland WI 53558.
msobolontime@gmail.com (term to 12/26)

Director Mike Crawford, Waunakee, WI 53539.
608/213-1806 • mike@marieandmike.com (term to 12/26)

Director Patrick Ready, (Past President) Madison, WI 53719 •
608/239-0791 • birdsready@gmail.com (term to 12/26)

Director Amy Harriman, Madison, WI • Amytharriman@gmail.com
(term to 12/26)

Director Sharon Johnson, Madison, WI • BEDBY8@charter.net (term to 12/26)

Director Andy Garcia-Rivera, Madison, WI 53717 • agarciarivera@gmail.com (term to 12/26)

Director Gail Smith, Middleton, WI 53562 • gsmithbird@gmail.com
(term to 12/26)

Director Christine McDaniel, cebmcDaniel@gmail.com (term to 12/26)

APPOINTED OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:

Data Collection Officer: Steve Fallon (see above)

County Contact Chair: Gene Birr, 3698 Morgan Marsh Rd.
Oconto Falls, WI 54154 • 920/461-0108 • gbbird22@gmail.com

Finance: Joanie Haugen, 9773 Vermont Church Rd., Black Earth, WI
53515 • jlhcb@gmail.com

WI Bluebird Editor: Patrick Ready (see above)

Membership: Valerie Van Winkle, PO Box 628492, Middleton, WI
5356 • ripvws@gmail.com

Public Relations: Gene Kroupa (see above)

Website: Andy Garcia-Rivera (see above)

Student and Youth Outreach Committee: Lowell Peterson, 1860 45th St.
Somerset, WI 54025 • (715) 247-3243

BRAW LIAISONS:

Bureau of Endangered Res. Liaison: Sumner Matteson, DNR, 101 S.
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Wisconsin Bluebird • Volume 41, Number 1 • Spring 2026

Published by the **Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc.**

Editor, Designer, Photographer, Patrick Ready, 815 Sky Ridge Dr., Madison WI 53719
608-239-0791 • birdsready@gmail.com

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Contact Membership Chair **Valerie Van Winkle**, PO Box 628492,
Middleton, WI 53562, Email: ripvws@gmail.com

Wisconsin Bluebird is published quarterly by the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc.
(BRAW) 815 Sky Ridge Dr., Madison, WI 53719. Subscription price is included in membership dues.
Subscriptions and membership renewals should be sent to: **Valerie Van Winkle**, PO Box 628492,
Middleton, WI 53562

Issues are dated Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Deadlines for submissions to the editor are due the 1st
of February, May, August, and November.

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the Bluebird
Restoration
Association of
Wisconsin, Inc.
is to broaden
the base of state
residents to help
Eastern Bluebirds
and native cavity
nesters by erect-
ing, maintaining
and monitoring
nest boxes.

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Patrick Ready
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2025 Data Report

See page 4

Check the address label. If it says "Spring 2026," then you need to RENEW membership now.

More 2025 BRAW Photo Contest Entries



Paula Avelleyra, Madison



Joan Eckhardt, Okatie, SC



Mary Blanke, Mukwonago



Hubert Steven Cole, Menomonie, WI

William Baader,
Mukwonago



Thanks to all who entered last year's contest.