

Spring 2025
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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.

Improving Bluebird Numbers!

See Page 4



Think Spring! Patrick Ready

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Is It Time to Renew Your Membership?

President's Report

By Steve Sample

The 32nd PBS Wisconsin Garden and Green Living Expo has just concluded, and BRAW's presence continues to draw attention to the plight of bluebirds and cavity nesters in general. We gained a good number of new members and educated many interested people.

Across the way was the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association's booth, and I spoke with Les Rhines (President) about leadership. Organizations like ours are facing the same issues in terms of volunteerism and participation. Our Boards of Directors are the key to our Expo participation success, because they volunteered to help run our booths. We also had six non-members helping out. Les Rhines did not have this level of help. Aging out is becoming a scary issue for most of the bird supporting organizations.

BRAW is facing a similar issue when it comes to leadership. Except for our Vice President, Brad Branwell, the BRAW officers are aging. We seemingly cannot find a



Treasurer at this writing, and our Secretary is in his 80's and will retire as an officer this year. Furthermore, our webmaster is looking to retire as well as myself at some point soon.

Our BOD is a group who volunteer for many other organizations with similar issues, and it is difficult to ask them to do more. How do we deal with this growing problem? We need more Board members and people to co-host some of our officers. Please let me know if you can help.

Good news! Gene Kroupa has worked hard to establish a partnership with the Driftless Area Land Conservancy to install, maintain and monitor nesting boxes. Together, we placed a good number of nesting boxes last year and low and behold, we have received an expanded interest to where they are asking for more than 150 nest boxes for this spring. Wow!

This order will deplete our stock, but we are working to get more boxes. As a result, we are forced to put a hold on requests for free boxes for the time being.

Bluebirds are coming back now and we need to fire up for the coming season. I'm ready! Are you!? Best wishes for a great year.
Steve

BRAW CC News

Spring 2025

Gene Birr, CC Chair
gbbird22@gmail.com

Daylight hours are getting longer, the snowfall this winter remains minimal, and so our hope for the early return of our bluebirds continues to grow. While we wait for their arrival, it is time to make all the preparations to have our boxes and trails ready for them.

The following CC's are sharing the programs, presentations and improvements they have planned for their trails and communities this year, or the final results and ideas about last season. I hope these will inspire each of us to add nestboxes to our trails and encourage others to begin their own new bluebird trails.

Meanwhile, I remain hopeful and excited for the return of Purple Martins to my backyard so they can begin to establish a colony here after I set up a T-14 house with gourds two years ago. Last August, a flock of nearly 50 adult and young martins discovered and explored my colony setup for several days while they were beginning their migration southward. I'll be sure to have my house up and ready when they do, and I'll have a separate gourd rack and another

house ready to put up if needed.

Marinette and Florence Counties, Barbie Allen

As I write my report, I hear it is very, very cold in Wisconsin. Hopefully all of our Wisconsin bluebirds have left the state for warmer weather. I, too, have traveled south for warmer weather. Yesterday there was a record 6 inches of snow in the panhandle of Florida with bad weather in Texas and other southern states. A friend of mine, sent me the picture below from the health facility where he lived, of a snow-covered bird feeder in Tennessee with three male bluebirds seeking food and cover. Sadly, he passed away a couple weeks later. This spring, I plan to relocate a lot of my birdhouses where I haven't had much luck attracting bluebirds, concentrating on areas where I have had better results. I also got two new



monitors in Marinette County as a result of the article that was published in the Peshtigo Times about the Carol McDaniel award I received from BRAW. A new trail was placed outside of Marinette in late fall for Gary Riggle; and a new trail will be placed in Dunbar this spring for Julianna Alexandersen. Wishing them and all our monitors good luck with their bluebird trails in 2025!!

Door County, Charlotte Lukes

I will be presenting my Bluebird Nest Box Power Point program at The Ridges Sanctuary Nature Center on Saturday, March 15th at 10 AM for their annual nest box building workshop. This is in the town of Baileys Harbor.

I will do the same program for Newport State Park near Ellison Bay on Friday, March 28th at 10 AM in their Nature Center meeting room.

Ozaukee County, Mary Holleback

We will be offering a "bluebird" workshop in March. Here's the write-up

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

When: Sat. March 1, 2025 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 a wide variety of 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 program 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 whom-ever you think might be interested.

Rock County, Rod Courtier

My trail seems to be changing, it was a horse pasture and now it is cattle, and the grass is longer. I will have to move a lot of my houses around. I am getting 8 houses from the city to put in the parks in Evansville, I need to put guards and post on them, and guards on some of my others also. Hopefully there will not be so many house sparrowws this year, I I traped quite a few last year.

I did have a Eurasian Tree Sparrow at my feeder last fall. It looks like they may be coming to our area, be alert.

Hope we have a great year.

Racine County, Rick Fare

It won't be long and a new bluebird season will be here. I have a good supply of new and refurbished boxes and look forward to visiting our monitors on their trails to replace some of their worn ones. I've had a few reports of bluebirds being seen this winter. Just like robins and other thrushes, they can shrink their reproductive organs after the nesting season and grow larger intestines to be able to digest berries and fruits in winter. Birds can really be adaptable.

Last year I had my most successful bluebird numbers on my trail despite 80% of my boxes having house sparrow activity at one time. When I encounter their nest in a box, I clean it out and leave the box open for a week. When I check the trail the following week, I close the box. This seems to work well. House sparrows can nest in a lot of different places.

I have 3 bluebird presentations scheduled so far this year. One is at

a Kenosha public library. I'm excited that their library system is offering lots of bird-related activities and want to start a Young Birding Group. The other 2 talks will be at the Pringle NC in Bristol and at the Seno Center in Burlington. Both will include a walk afterwards on their bluebird trails to check out some boxes. The one at the Seno Center will be one of the field trips sponsored by WI Natural Resource Foundation.

I hope everyone has a successful season this year.

Waukesha County, Steve Vidmar

Hello everyone, I am the Waukesha coordinator. This year we had good bluebird success and some Tree Swallows success. Again the House Sparrow population here is out of hand. We captured and killed over 100 House Sparrows last year. As soon as they start building a nest, we set up a Van Ert trap and remove them. I always try to catch both of them, the male and female as they will just pair up and continue to harass the bluebirds in the area. For the smart ones we add fake wooden eggs (painted white) to the nest box and that just drives them nuts that another bird has laid eggs in the box they claimed as their own. They can't resist to go into the box to check out the fake eggs. I take 6 small wooden eggs and glue them together to look like a clutch of sparrow eggs in a tight bunch. Then I spray paint them white on both sides. Works really good when the House Sparrows sit on the top of the box and refuse to enter. I believe in removing the House Sparrows and killing them. I understand this may be difficult for some, but is necessary. All other birds are released unharmed. This is a lot of work and requires constant checks throughout the day. If you set Van Ert trap in a nest box, you have to check it several times a day. Once the House Sparrows are gone the bluebirds and other native birds have a much better chance of being successful. When bluebirds have a nest of eggs or young, the resident House Sparrows have been removed and cannot stress out the bluebird parents. Life is much easier for bluebirds to remove the House Sparrows which want to break the eggs or remove the young from

the nest. Sometimes they even kill the bluebird parents. Please remove all House Sparrows from breeding and continuing to damage the bluebird population. Anyway we are gearing up again to remove the House Sparrows and are repairing any damaged nest boxes from Woodpeckers. We left one of our nest boxes open and a woodpecker still drilled a new hole in the side of the box. Just crazy! Good luck this season.

Oconto County, Gene Birt

After a very successful season of fledging bluebirds last year I am looking forward to even better results this spring. I received a great deal on a good supply of cedar and redwood lumber and have begun to build another hundred nest boxes. At least 20 of these will be for Ryan Walter for a new golf course trail in Winnebago County that he will monitor. I will be giving my annual bluebird presentation at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Green Bay in late March, the date not yet determined.

Marathon, Portage and Wood County, Brad Branwell

This last fall I was busy helping monitors replace several of their old nest boxes that were starting to fall apart and beyond simple repairs. These trails were developed under Kent Hall's coordination, and I am pleased that several of his trail monitors continued monitoring and maintaining their boxes. However, some of the boxes that I replaced are now easily 15-20 years old and included some of the ginormous Peterson style boxes. These boxes have served their years and I'm sure produced a great deal of native cavity nesting songbirds. With cracked roofs and sides and woodpecker damage among other things, it was time to replace them with new boxes that won't leak water into the nest. I will be working this spring as well replacing more boxes with a likely end total of 70 boxes replaced. If you are a monitor in the central Wisconsin area and need some of your boxes replaced or assistance with relocating boxes to more suitable habitat, please contact me and I will be happy to help you. I am also happy to help with developing new trails for monitors as well.

Data Report for 2024

By Steve Fallon

The final numbers for our 2024 bluebird fledglings are in, and the birds are still on the comeback trail! Our monitors reported 17,660 EAB fledglings for 2024 and that is over 16% higher than the number of birds fledged in 2023. I've included maps to show where in the state the numbers came from.

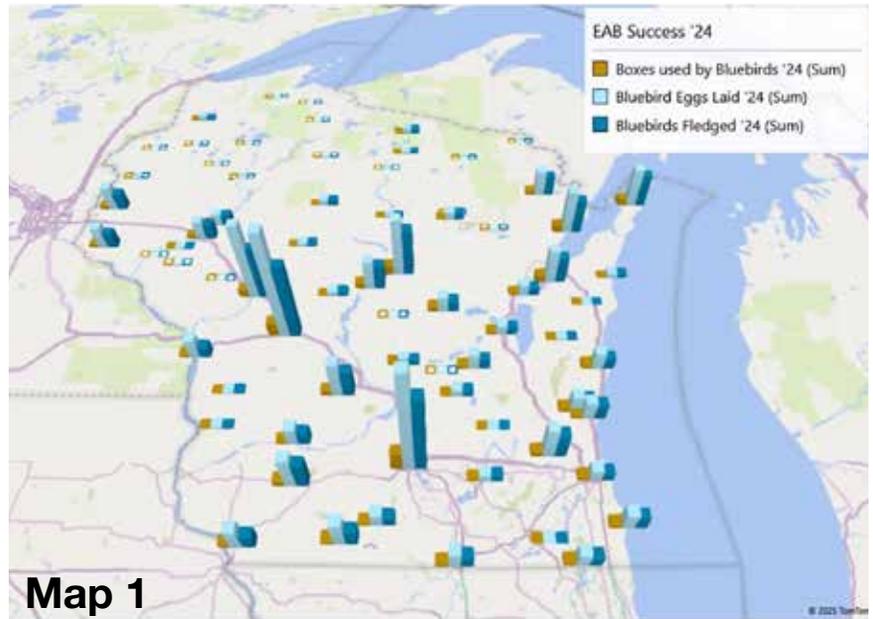
The first map shows our 2024 Bluebird numbers by county. The numbers of boxes used by bluebirds, eggs laid, and bluebirds ultimately fledged are indicated by the height of the bars in the graph, with colors corresponding to the category in the legend.

The next map shows a comparison of the 2024 fledged EAB numbers compared to the 2023 values. In many areas we saw the same numbers or decent increases in bluebird fledges. As expected, some monitors reported very good success, but others reported that the birds had another tough year. The cool, wet spring contributed to some of the problems observed. So overall, we saw some improvement, but like last year, it was spotty in terms of location. As expected, the recovery is still underway. In 2024, we had about 3% more boxes in play which might lead one to assume a three percent improvement. However, the placement of those houses and increased numbers of birds led to nearly a 22% increase in the number of "houses used by bluebirds" from the prior year.

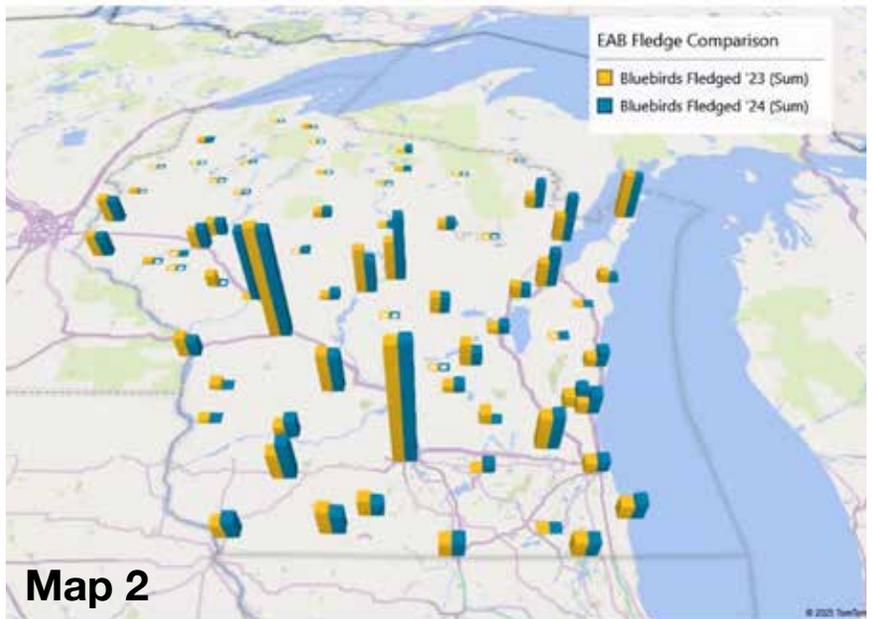
The final map is a pie chart that indicates the relative numbers of bluebirds compared to the other cavity nesters that share the bluebird boxes. The total number of all cavity nesters fledged for 2024 was 31,744, which is about 2% above of the total number of cavity nesters we had in 2023. Due to some BRAW initiatives with landholders in southwestern Wisconsin, we saw some significant EAB improvement from that area, as well as some from our northeastern Wisconsin counties. Tree swallow and chickadee numbers were down slightly, around 97% of the '23 numbers. The wren numbers were 72% of the '23 numbers. However, many monitors don't record wren numbers, so that could skew those results.

We want to recognize our monitors for their hard work. We had nearly 300 reports from our monitors that yielded 17,660 bluebird fledglings. A nice bump this year!

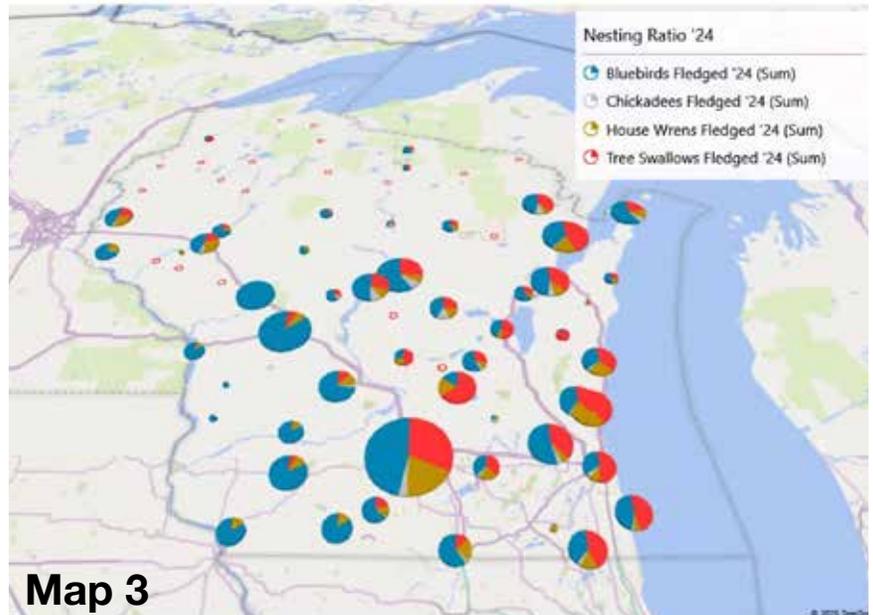
Thanks, all for your hard work! As always, please feel free to contact me with corrections or omissions.



Map 1



Map 2



Map 3

Name	Co.	EABL Fledged	Name	Co.	EABL Fledged	Name	Co.	EABL Fledged
Barbara Styczynski	Brown	8	Ruth Smith	Dane	16	Patrick Michaels	Iowa	9
Barbie Allen	Brown	102	Sylvia Marek	Dane	22	Savanna Institute	Iowa	13
Della and Gerald Clabots	Brown	133	Taylor Tagliavia	Dane	43	Victoria and Mike Shallow	Iowa	34
Gene Birr	Brown	20	Tim Frank	Dane	63	Darlene Neismer	Jackson	62
Jane Swagel	Brown	5	Wendy Vredenburg	Dane	5	Darrel Eberhardt	Jackson	704
John Loehlein	Brown	6	James Kronenberg	Dodge	12	Jane Prindle	Jackson	4
Jon Beckman	Brown	22	Barbie Allen	Door	10	Kim Schliebe Sue Eberhardt	Jackson	129
Kathy Krouse	Brown	45	Ben Teich	Door	101	Larry Casper	Jackson	192
Mike Olejniczak	Brown	9	Carl & Darcy Wallace	Door	25	Gerald Gerndt	Jefferson	85
Molly Winder	Brown	3	Cathy Eckers	Door	8	Joanne Belstner	Jefferson	15
Renee Heder	Brown	16	Eric Wickstrom	Door	73	Tammy Frey	Jefferson	30
Sally Riemer	Brown	27	Glenna Peters	Door	4	Stan Parsons	Juneau	99
Steve Mayer	Brown	70				Anna Hudson	Kenosha	25
Terri Sprout	Brown	56				Dennis Persinger	Kenosha	58
Warren and Julie Schultz	Brown	28				John Meyer	Kenosha	86
Bob Ring	Calumet	17				Julie Milligan-Barr	Kenosha	37
Debbie Anderson	Chippewa	220				Ron Cascarano	Kenosha	9
Joan Hoy	Chippewa	3				Ron Cascarano	Kenosha	10
Marilynn Slezak	Clark	56				Rosenstiel Krerowicz	Kenosha	24
Graham Steinhauer	Columbia	9				Don Pritzl	Kewaunee	41
Jeanne Flickinger	Columbia	111				Barbie Allen	Kewaunee	43
Louise Venne	Columbia	4				Allen Herbers	La Crosse	136
Mandy Marin	Columbia	7				Dan Henderson	La Crosse	36
Dennis Kirschbaum	Crawford	25				Verdel Dawson	La Crosse	63
Ann Wick	Dane	516				Dale/Doris Moody	Lafayette	57
Bob and Gerry Bennicoff	Dane	8	Jim Blair	Door	15	James Barth	Lafayette	208
Bob Novy	Dane	38	Jim Blair + others			Jennifer Filipiak	Lafayette	5
David Gugger	Dane	5	Newport Park	Door	15	Jim Hess	Lafayette	94
David Lucey	Dane	148	Ken & Signe Onsrud	Door	276	Karen Koebel	Manitowoc	4
Dawn Zuengler	Dane	15	Marjorie Andrae	Door	26	Al Lancaster	Marathon	4
Deb & Charlie Knudsen	Dane	20	Nick Anderson	Door	53	Jolie Wood	Marathon	22
Deb Rohde	Dane	4	Sandy and Ed Miller	Door	22	Barbie Allen	Marinette	342
Ellen Neal	Dane	21	Sherry Seubert	Door	5	Jo DeVetter	Marinette	32
Gail Smith	Dane	5	Wendy Lukes	Door	33	Tim Comer	Marinette	52
Gail Van Haren	Dane	37	Charles Bergsten	Douglas	39	Daryl Christensen	Marquette	34
Gene Kroupa	Dane	20	Hubert Steve Cole	Dunn	8	Daryl Christensen	Marquette	48
Guy Martin	Dane	36	Bernie Hoefgen	Eau Claire	41	Alan Sherkow	Milwaukee	35
Howard Fenton	Dane	8	Joan Hoy	Eau Claire	9	Lynn Crawford	Milwaukee	25
Jack Saltes	Dane	56	Laurence Liegel	Eau Claire	73	Mark McNally	Milwaukee	0
James Mand	Dane	19	Luke Trittelwitz	Eau Claire	117	Michelle Mellencamp	Milwaukee	44
Joanie Haugen	Dane	59	Martina Lindseth	Eau Claire	18	Robert Kaleta	Milwaukee	9
John Hurd	Dane	13	Rita Gundry	Eau Claire	77	Shari Kastner	Milwaukee	77
Jon Frohling	Dane	4	Dorothy Messner	Fond du Lac	29	Bruce and Jerrilyn Brewer	Monroe	233
Joyce Burmester	Dane	0	Memuna Khan	Fond du Lac	193	Cathy Malzacher Sharon Teske	Monroe	195
Kathie Brock	Dane	53	David Speigle	Grant	252	Charles H Lautermilch	Monroe	91
Laura Cominetti	Dane	130	Diane Morgan	Grant	36	Gordon Weber	Monroe	466
Lori Sheehan	Dane	70	Jerry Skalak	Grant	4	Gordon Weber	Monroe	88
Marianne Jensen	Dane	47	Kerry Beheler	Grant	16	Gretchen Reis	Monroe	9
Mary Sobol	Dane	8	Pete Moris	Grant	6	Jeff and Abby Duebler	Monroe	192
Mike Crawford	Dane	11	Sara Wiegel	Grant	4	Micheal Helgren	Monroe	191
Oakwood Village			Eileen Bruno	Green	5	Warren and Janet Evens	Monroe	143
PR Val Van Winkle	Dane	0	Jay Brooks	Green	68	Barbie Allen	Oconto	169
Pam Heilman	Dane	16	Kathleen Dreikosen	Green	94	Chantel McLoed	Oconto	4
Patrick Handrick	Dane	39	Reyne Phillips	Green	16	David Retzlaff	Oconto	5
Patrick Hasburgh	Dane	0	Rodney Courtier	Green	29	Don Denor	Oconto	5
Patrick Ready	Dane	68	Anne Connor	Iowa	20	Don Denor	Oconto	9
Phillip Simon	Dane	13	Brenna & Darrell Budic	Iowa	3	Don Denor	Oconto	3
Rainer Dronzek	Dane	36	Carolyn Smith	Iowa	5	Don Denor	Oconto	8
Sally Keyel	Dane	12	Dale/Doris Moody	Iowa	330	Gene Birr	Oconto	305
Stephen and Mary Lang	Dane	51	Douglas Gurak and Mary Krutz	Iowa	21	Gerald Gerndt	Oconto	58
Steve Fallon	Dane	12	Eugene Kroupa	Iowa	56	Jenny Meyer	Oconto	0
Steve Fallon	Dane	10	Gail Van Haren	Iowa	78	Joan Altergott	Oconto	41
Steve Sample	Dane	69	James Marlow	Iowa	2	Julie Barker	Oconto	0
Sue Eagle & Cynthia Carlson	Dane	64	Karen Burkeland	Iowa	27	Kristen Laufenberg	Oconto	53
Gail Smith	Dane	5	Laurie Derse	Iowa	10	Kristen Laufenberg	Oconto	4



Patrick Ready

Name	Co.	EABL Fledged	Name	Co.	EABL Fledged	Name	Co.	EABL Fledged
Len Mihalski	Oconto	10	Dennis and Heather Jensen	Racine	3	Jim & Lori Livingston	Taylor	40
Sue Clairmont	Oconto	4	Rick Fare	Racine	91	Bill LeClaire	Vernon	21
Susan Clairmont	Oconto	12	Sara Fare	Racine	55	Brian Logan	Vilas	5
Tom Wittkopf	Oconto	4	Thomas Jensen	Racine	77	Greg Olson	Vilas	51
Virginia A. Behrend	Oconto	16	Dan & Sue Johnson	Richland	5	Robert Butzer	Vilas	31
Erin Blow	Oneida	16	Debbie Pavick	Richland	57	Ralph Konrath	Walworth	3
Greg Olson	Oneida	21	Paul Klawiter	Richland	222	Dee Freeman	Washington	53
Daniel Schultz	Outagamie	17	Susan Dvorak	Richland	6	Jean Hamilton	Washington	4
Steve Mayer	Outagamie	148	Jerry Wolf	Rock	0	Jim Wolf	Washington	59
Steve Schleitwiler	Outagamie	5	Jim Brase	Rock	1	Ray Pinter	Washington	119
Ellen Lafouge	Ozaukee	122	Mary Essen	Rock	0	Susan Crowley	Washington	50
Mary Holleback	Ozaukee	42	Michael Johnson	Rock	71	William Rumpf	Washington	22
Molly Ticcioni	Ozaukee	11	Rodney Courtier	Rock	185	Anne Moretti	Waukesha	24
Nick Gall	Ozaukee	87	Steve Fallon	Rock	9	Karl Timm	Waukesha	103
Richard Albert	Ozaukee	3	Tracy Sengupta	Rock	16	Keith Feind	Waukesha	0
Richard Albert	Ozaukee	14	Eugene Kroupa	Sauk	11	Mark Kastner	Waukesha	12
Richard Albert	Ozaukee	40	Evonne Kraemer	Sauk	198	Norm Hausser Kate Gorde	Waukesha	111
Trevor Mihalski	Ozaukee	8	Mike Lasceski	Sauk	5	Shari Kastner	Waukesha	36
Carol Forsythe	Pierce	24	Susan Kenney	Sauk	17	Steve Vidmar	Waukesha	33
Jim and Dorothy Beix	Pierce	179	Bruce and Ruth Marion	Sauk	139	Tom Moser	Waukesha	47
Jim and Dorothy Beix	Pierce	28	Laurence Liegel	Sauk	223	Walter Jost	Waukesha	108
Jim Higgins	Pierce	21	Ruthann Meiers	Shawano	143	Melissa Bruder	Waukesha	97
Mark Ritzinger	Pierce	16	Ellen Klusmeier	Sheboygan	25	Alice Melba Chaney Carey	Waupaca	142
Pauline Jauquet	Pierce	62	Ellen Klusmeier	Sheboygan	22	Craig and Sheila Beyer	Waupaca	823
Bill and Janice Seybold	Portage	90	Ellen Klusmeier	Sheboygan	17	Lori Paige	Waupaca	14
Bill and Jill Ziehr	Portage	54	Janet and Andy Raddatz	Sheboygan	46	Bob Fox	Waukesha	205
Brad Branwell	Portage	155	Janice Wittkopp	Sheboygan	40	Len Place	Waukesha	37
Carla Struble	Portage	78	LuAnn Maratik	Sheboygan	25	Barb Stanek	Winnebago	4
Darlene & Jim Jakusz	Portage	125	Robyn Jacobchick	Sheboygan	20	David Misterek	Winnebago	114
David/Patti Becker	Portage	104	Therese Wilk	Sheboygan	62	Ryan Walter	Winnebago	28
Dean Hodsdon	Portage	0	Cathryn Burns	St. Croix	12	Todd Verboomen	Winnebago	4
Jean Klein	Portage	22	Kathy Fredrickson	St. Croix	9	Fred Camacho	Wood	94
Joe Schultz	Portage	58	Debby Walters	St. Croix	25	Karen Haralson	Wood	50
Karen Dostal	Portage	80	Jim Higgins	St. Croix	88	Kim Marshall	Wood	34
Lisa Bey	Portage	17	Lowell Peterson	St. Croix	96	Mary Dahm	Wood	43
Mary Bratz and Dick Stephens	Portage	124	Pat and Steve Cox	St. Croix	10	Mike Moran	Wood	127
Wendy Carlson	Portage	101	Paul Wenzel	St. Croix	60	Ruby Thomas	Wood	51
Al and Melody Orban	Racine	22	Pauline Jauquet	St. Croix	22	Tom and Gayle Bartelt	Wood	127
Barbara Nelson	Racine	15	Stanley King	St. Croix	19	Total		17660
Chris Glass	Racine	27	Dwight Offord	Taylor	72			

2024 Winter Donations

Lanny Hevey, \$10
Richard Gunderson \$50
David Roberts, \$25
Vicki and Shaun Abshere, \$30
Tim Frank, \$100
Gordon Telford, \$50
Donald Persons, \$90
Sally Riemer, \$15
Susan Kinde, \$100
Dick Filzen, \$25
Susan and Lee Basten, \$10
William Prue, \$125
Mike Martin, \$25
Sharon Johnson, \$15
Greg Steinkamp, \$40
Jim Higgins, \$25
Leslie Livingston, \$25

Paul and Judy Kolosso, \$15 nest box
Evelyn Psenicka, \$75
Carol Ramage, \$15 nest box
Laurence Liegel, \$45 nest box, \$30 research
Jane Prindle, \$50
Charles Zarnoth, \$52
Greg Jones, \$40
Dan Schroeder, \$30
Timothy Freeman, \$100
Tim Koechel, \$500 nest box
Don Pritzl, \$75
Rita Gundry, \$50
Winnebago Audubon Society, \$500
Mary Craig, \$20
Barbara Jones, \$15
Judy and Phil Loy, \$10
Jack Saltes, \$25
Steve and Patti Heimerman, \$25
Mary Holleback, \$75

Marilyn Pick, \$25
David and Carolyn Mertens, \$100
Amy and Jeff Maras, \$80
Heidi Kelly, \$10

In Memory of Kent Hall
Eric Wickstrom, \$50



Jack Bartholmai

PBS Wisconsin Garden and Green Living Expo 2025

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

Over 12,000 attended the three-day event held at the Expo Center in Madison.

Thanks to all the volunteers that helped BRAW spread the word about bluebird conservation in the state of Wisconsin. (Photos by Pat Ready, Steve Sample and Deb Ready.)



Spring 2025 New Members

- Amy Harriman, Madison
- Candy Bubolz, La Valle
- Loren and Brenda Baldwin, Suamico
- Ixchel Ripp, Black Earth
- Jeanne Sullwold, Somerset
- Leah Johnson, Madison
- Dick Filzen, Appleton
- Sharon Johnson, Madison
- Shelly Culea, Mequon
- Stacy Williams, Fox Point
- William Baader, Mukwonago
- Ron Schoepp, Lodi
- Dennis Fletcher, Eagle
- Dennis Turner, Appleton
- James Lanier, Tomah
- Sue Hunt, Wautoma
- Heather Lynch, Brooklyn
- Randy Fox, Lodi
- Stephanie Thompson, Lodi
- Melody Walker, Belleville
- Melissa Swank, Madison
- Bob Peterson, Green Lake
- Lynn and Joe Barrett, White Lake
- Sheri Hazeltine, Mt. Horeb
- Anne Gunther, Verona
- Elaine Reiss, IA
- Karen Stier, Sun Prairie
- Ray Iehl, Arena
- Wendi Tavs, Fall River
- Richard Kilmer, Wonewoc
- Bess Molson-Huddle, Oregon
- Stephanie Teal, Madison
- Kim Geisthardt, Fond du Lac
- Rebecca Schmoll, New London
- Ann Wolfe, Ridgeway
- Sadie Garber, Madison
- Cindy Rabe, Lake Geneva

Bluebird Migratory Patterns Are Changing

By Gene Kroupa

Some seasons, like last year's, migrating bluebirds seem to arrive earlier from their over-wintering grounds. And in other years, like 2022, pairs filter back later than usual in parts of the state.

On average, though, they arrive on a familiar schedule whether we are talking about Eastern, Western or Mountain bluebirds. However, the migration routes of all three species have shifted farther to the continent's center over the years.

These are key conclusions from an analysis of 10-years (2009-2018) of eBird data. eBird is a free, online database of bird observations by citizen scientists that's used by birders, researchers, and conservationists.

A joint project between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, the database is a reliable source of information about bird distribution, abundance, habitat use, and trends. As a side note: it is so important for box monitors to report their nesting data at season's end to BRAW so that fledging success trends can be tracked.

The Canadian researchers wanted to learn whether there were changes in "the timing of spring and fall migrations and migration speed, and the



Finding a clean, well-located nest box is all that arriving bluebirds can expect. (Pat Ready)

population centroids during breeding and migration." Centroids in this case refers to the center or main locations of activity.

Over the decade studied, the North American bluebird population centroids during the breeding period appear to have shifted southward. Moreover, the migration routes followed by the eastern and western bluebirds have moved toward the middle of the continent. However, no change was detected in migratory timing nor speed of the species' spring and fall migrations.

Bottomline: While the migration routes followed might be somewhat

different, the spring arrival dates of bluebirds in Wisconsin can be variable but not change much. As bluebirders, our job is to make sure that nest boxes are cleaned, the doors closed, predator guards in place, and mounting poles straight and steady.

Information for this article was obtained from: Sonnleitner, Jared, Stefanie E. LaZerte, Ann E. McKellar, Nancy J. Flood, and Matthew W. Reudink. 2022. "Rapid Shifts in Migration Routes and Breeding Latitude in North American Bluebirds." *Ecosphere* 13(12): e4316. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.431612> of 12 SONNLEITNER ET AL.

A Legacy of Impact

Have you considered what your legacy will be? Legacy gifts given to the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW) will help us promote the bluebird population for years to come.

Legacy gifts can be earmarked for Nest Box Trails, Education or General Support.

Nest Box Trails gifts are used to cover the cost to make boxes that meet the NABS requirements, and for accessories like conduit, predator guards, etc. It also includes the cost of shipping/delivering boxes to members who agree to monitor bluebird trails.

Education gifts cover the cost of educational speakers at the annual con-



P. Ready

vention, local speaking engagements and the brochures/hand-outs which educate the reader on how to support bluebirds in their area. This fund also includes the quarterly *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter.

General Support includes all other activities that support bluebirds and other cavity nesters in Wisconsin. Specifically, the work of our County Contacts in encouraging/supporting new trail monitors in their county and research projects to determine the best design and location of nest boxes in

order to support bluebirds and discourage predators.

BRAW, Inc is a volunteer-run organization. Over 98% of funds donated go directly to support the mission of BRAW.

When thinking about legacy gifts, note that if you are 70 ½ or older, you can make a qualified charitable distribution to BRAW, Inc from your IRA and satisfy your required minimum distribution without incurring income tax.

Donations can be sent to BRAW, Inc. 9773 Vermont Church Rd., Black Earth, WI 53515

Contact Joanie Haugen jlhcbcs@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Bluebirding Tips: House Sparrows Are Killers!

By Patrick Ready, Editor

It doesn't matter if you have one nest box or 100, you may attract House Sparrows at some time. The worst case scenario is when you have bluebirds nesting in a box, and the House Sparrow wants to move in. Male House Sparrows can be ruthless!

They will wait for a bluebird to go inside and then attack it in the box. Typically they go for the head, pecking it until the bluebird is dead. They'll do the same for Tree Swallows. In my 30 years of monitoring I've seen this happen too often. So what can you do?

There are very few options. Some folks drill another hole in a side panel the same size as the entrance hole so the bluebird can escape. Others use a skylight nest box that has a plastic covered hole in the roof to allow sunlight in. Sparrows don't like light shining on their nest.

While effective in some settings, research in Wisconsin has shown two things: 1) bluebirds and House Sparrows both prefer boxes with opaque roofs, and 2) some House Sparrows will still use skylight boxes



This bluebird was killed by a male House Sparrow that wanted the nest box. (Wendy Vredenburgh)

when no other option is available. The most effective option is to remove the offending male House Sparrow.

The Van Ert Sparrow Trap is what most monitors use. The trap cost about \$15 and has easy instructions on how to use it. Keep in mind that this is a live trap that merely closes off the entrance hole. Captured birds can be released into a clear plastic bag for identification and disposition, including taking them to another area for release.

Another option is to locate nest boxes



House Sparrows will build on top of a bluebird nest after usurping the skylight box. (Gene Kroupa)

where House Sparrows aren't prevalent. Avoid subdivisions and farms where livestock are present. Check out city, town, county, business and state parks, as well as arboretums, golf courses and cemeteries with mowed areas. In approaching the managers of these places for permission, always remind them that **House Sparrows are an invasive species not protected by law.**

Use the Van Ert Trap to Solve Your House Sparrow Problems.

Order traps online from Van Ert Enterprises at:

vanerttraps.com

Approximately \$15.00 + Shipping

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 put a large, clear plastic bag over the box and slightly open the door. The trapped bird will fly to the top of the bag for you to see what you have. Release bluebirds and dispatch House Sparrows.

Installation is quick and simple provided there is a screw for mounting.



Second Nest Box Program Off to Good Start

By Gene Kroupa

Last year BRAW teamed up with the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) to supply free nest boxes, poles and predator guards to qualified members and supporters. In return, recipients needed to maintain and regularly monitor the boxes, plus report the nesting results to BRAW.

DALC serves seven southern Wisconsin counties, including Iowa, Grant, Lafayette, Green, Dane, Richland, and Sauk. It is dedicated to preserving and managing lands for the benefit of future generations and the native species that call them home.

BRAW bluebirders assisted 24 recipients with locating and installing 68 nest boxes, plus helped them by trouble-shooting problems, such as with pests and predators. At season's end, 22 recipients reported fledging 267 bluebirds and 88 other cavity nesters.

As DALC Executive Director Jennifer Filipiak noted: "The landowners loved it and it was just such a great feel-good, conservation win." Now, thanks to a second grant from the Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin, DALC and BRAW are offering a second free nest box program.

"So far we have had over 50 new applicants, plus some of last year's recipients are asking for more nest boxes," said BRAW's President Steve Sample. Hopefully, nesting results will be as good as they were in 2024.



DALC properties protected by conservation easements are often identified by signs. (Hanna Ornelles)



Mike and Vicky Shallow install a nest box provided by BRAW. (Gene Kroupa)

SHOW US YOUR BLUEBIRDS! Enter our member photo contest.



Show Us Your Bluebirds!

Enter the BRAW 2025 Photo Contest for a Chance to Win a \$50 Amazon Gift Card and MORE!

The contest is open to all BRAW members. Photos of bluebirds are preferred but photos of other cavity nesters are also accepted. There will be first, second and third place winners.

RULES:

Open to BRAW Members only.

Original photography please.

Up to 3 submissions (photos) per person.

Photos do not need to be from the current year.

Photos will be judged on composition, image quality and subject matter. Judges will not be affiliated with BRAW.

FIRST PLACE

A \$50 Amazon Gift Card.

Your photo on the cover of the *Wisconsin Bluebird* Newsletter - Winter Issue.

A free, one-year subscription to the newsletter for yourself, a friend or family member.

SECOND PLACE

A \$25 Amazon Gift Card.

A free, one-year subscription to the newsletter for yourself, a friend or family member.

THIRD PLACE

A free, one-year subscription to the newsletter for yourself, a friend or family member.

Submission deadline is September 30.

Please email your photographs (JPEG file) with **your name, location and any other information** that you think others will find interesting to: Patrick Ready at birdsready@gmail.com. Subject line: **BRAW Bluebird Contest 2025**

No mail-in photos please.

Handy Residents Build Nest Boxes

By Gene Kroupa

Last year BRAW and its County Contacts delivered and helped erect nearly 500 nest boxes. Naturally, the question arises: Where do they all come from?

Many come from longtime sources like members Fred Craig, of Onalaska, and Gene Birr, of Oconto Falls. But a new source that constructed 50 North American Bluebird Society (NABS) style nest boxes is the Handy Residents Club of Oakwood Village's Prairie Ridge Campus, a retirement center in Madison.

According to BRAW membership chair and resident Val Van Winkle, "the Club was looking for a winter project. Agreeing to support the bluebird nest box project was an easy decision for the Club members, because they could share their skills for a worthy cause." Plus, the Campus is a Life Member of BRAW with its own monitored trail of nest boxes.

Dave Lucey, of Cross Plains, agreed to work with the group and oversee the project. "The project was a good fit for me," said Lucey, a retired Waunakee Middle School teacher. "We improved on the basic NABS box



Members of the Handy Residents Club of Prairie Village pose with 50 nest boxes they built for BRAW. Left side, front to back: Jerry Martin, Ray Unrein, Garth Stroble, Mike Mullins, Tony Pullara, Robert Todd, Dick Trexel, Don Becker, and Jerry Sieling. Right side, front to back: Val Van Winkle, Roger Becker, Cindy Weber, Jan Erlandson, Fred Day, Joe Belisle and Ed Gry. (Mark Martin)

design in a number of ways, including a simpler method of ventilating the box during hot weather," he noted.

Two Club members spent a couple days cutting out the box parts from 3/4-inch, smooth cut, dimension pine lumber in one of the center's workshops. Then a group of 13 spent two hours putting all 50 boxes together on a well-organized assembly line.

"It was a great social event that

ended with the satisfaction of a job well-done," said Van Winkle.

"We already have some of the boxes spoken for use on a new trail to be set up at a 200-acre site," said BRAW president Steve Sample. "As with all of our sources of nest boxes, we either supply or reimburse them the cost for materials used in the construction."

"All in all, it takes many volunteer hands and donations to meet the demand for nest boxes," concluded Sample. If you would care to support this effort, please include a donation with your membership renewal, do so online at www.braw.org, or send a check to:

BRAW
Joanie Haugen
9773 Vermont Church Rd.
Black Earth, WI 53515



An assembly line made up of (l. to r.) Dick Trexel, Mike Mullins, Jerry Sieling, Ed Gry and Cindy Weber made short work of putting together the nest boxes. (Val Van Winkle)



Nest Guide to 3 Cavity Nesters

by Patrick Ready/BRAW

Eastern Bluebird

Fine or coarse grasses, pine needles, lined with fine grasses.



Tree Swallow

Similar to bluebirds, coarser grasses & straw, lined with feathers when eggs are laid.



Black-capped Chickadee

Moss, fine grass, lined with animal hair.



House Wren

Sticks and twigs jammed in tight. Lined with a small amount of fine grass. Often builds dummy nest with a few sticks but no grass lining.



Wren photos by Jack Bartholmai

House Sparrow

Grass, straw, feathers, paper, plastic, etc. and they usually swirl the grass upward to fill the box, then tunnel down in. Sometimes when a nest is first started it may be hard to tell what species is nesting. Wait a day or two to see how the nest develops. Feathers and wrappers early on with some grass pieces are definite signs of House Sparrows.



Above: Peterson box filled with straw, grass, and garbage indicate a House Sparrow nest.

Middle: Eggs-white or grey with brown specs

Left: Beginning nest. Similar to bluebird and Tree Swallow but note chicken feathers and debris = signs it's a House Sparrow.

Species Identification of cavity nesters

Male & female Eastern Bluebird



Female & male Tree Swallow.



Black-capped Chickadee, sexes similar.

House Wren, sexes similar.



All photos by Pat Ready unless otherwise credited.

Membership Renewal Information

By Valerie Van Winkle, Membership Services

If the address label of your Wisconsin Bluebird newsletter reads Spring 2025 next to your name, then your membership expires this month, and you need to renew immediately. If you are an online member, you won't see this clue so please consider marking the expiration date on your calendar when you sign up. We don't want you to miss a single newsletter!

The next issue of the Wisconsin Bluebird goes into production in May and will be mailed in June. Memberships received after May 15 may not be processed in time to receive the Summer newsletter. Consider an extended or 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
- \$60 Extended Online Annual Membership for 3 years
- \$25 Individual or Family Annual Membership (Printed copy mailed)
- \$75 Extended Individual or Family Annual Membership for 3 years (Printed copy mailed)
- \$100 Corporate Annual Membership
- \$300 Life Membership

A BRAW membership makes a great Anytime gift!

\$10 includes Online Newsletter
Give the gift of Bluebirds!

Name: _____

Address: _____

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*BRAW sends out nest box deal promotions and "time to renew" reminders via email.

Donation (optional)

\$25 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:

This is a renewal.

This is a new membership.

This is a GIFT membership.

Enclosed please find my check \$ _____

Mail this membership request to:

BRAW, Inc.

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.

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Shop the BRAW Online Store

Check out the new BRAW Online Store! T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and lots more all with the BRAW logo on them. Items can be ordered online at <https://stores.inksoft.com/brawstore/shop/products/all?page=1>



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The mission and purpose of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc. is to broaden the base of state residents to help Eastern Bluebirds and native cavity nesters by erecting, maintaining and monitoring nest boxes.

Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin

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See page 4



Mary Blanke

Check the address label. If it says "Spring 2025," then you need to RENEW membership now.

2024 Entries to the BRAW Photo Contest

See page 10 for the 2025 BRAW Photo Contest rules.



Jana Soerens



Herbert Steve Cole



Molly Winder

Wisconsin Bluebird



Richard Albert