



## **BRAW BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**June 7, 2025**

**Waunakee Public Library & Online**

**Officers/Directors Present:** Steve Sample, Gene Kroupa, David Lucey, Mary Sobol, Patrick Ready, Mike Crawford, Brad Branwell-Zinda, Dan Schroeder, Gail Smith, and Amy Harriman.

**Others Present:** Regan Finn

**Unable to Attend:** Andy Garcia-Rivera, Val Van Winkle

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order by President Steve Sample at 9:19 a.m.
2. **Roll Call.** Roll call was taken, and we had a quorum.
3. **Changes to the Agenda.** Mike Crawford requested to add “2026 Garden Expo and Convention” to the agenda
4. **Minutes.** Minutes of the March 1, 2025, Board Meeting were unanimously approved on a motion made by Dave Lucey and seconded by Mary Sobol.
5. **Officers’ Reports.** The following officers’ reports were given:
  - a. **President’s Report & Communications.** President Steve Sample reported:
    - i. BRAW received significant correspondence about the increased cold, wet weather and its impact on fledglings, plus Gene Kroupa’s public relations efforts.
    - ii. Significant number of requests for boxes and for presentations and speaking opportunities.
    - iii. The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin’s Harold Raymond Cram Bluebird Restoration Fund awarded BRAW a \$2,200 grant, which closes out its spendable fund but not the Cram Fund.
    - iv. President Sample additionally discussed adding BRAW labels to free BRAW nest boxes, as discussed further in New Business.
  - b. **Vice-President’s Report.** Vice-President Brad Branwell-Zinda reported that he is working diligently on the Fall Convention, but we still need to focus on the silent

auction. Gail Smith agreed to help with the auction and food planning, which Pat Ready and Mary Sobel agreed to plan and manage. Pat Ready agreed to help with speakers and other items as well. Branwell-Zinda additionally discussed Marathon County nest efforts.

- c. **Treasurer's Report.** Treasurer Dan Schroeder reported that the checking account decreased by \$11,000 due to expenditures. The largest expense was \$8,000 for purchasing nest boxes, poles and clamps. Treasurer Schroeder additionally shared that we are moving funds from the checking account into savings in order to earn interest on the funds in the account. Gene Kroupa asked if the Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin has reimbursed BRAW for expenses. Schroeder will follow up with Joanie about the grant from the Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin.

## 6. **Committee Reports.**

- a. **Membership.** President Sample reported on behalf of Val Van Winkle that the membership is holding steady. Total membership stands at 966 members as of the Board Meeting, which is about the same as the 2024 Summer Membership numbers which stood at 962 members.

Gene Kroupa added that individuals who received Nest Boxes this spring from the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) program also received the most recent newsletter, which included a membership request to the potential new members. Val will follow up with those individuals in the next few weeks to see if we can convert those individuals to new members.

- b. **Finance.** Joanie Haugen was unable to attend the meeting, but she had provided updated financials for our review. President Sample provided a brief overview. A motion to approve the finance report made by David Lucey and seconded by Mike Crawford. was unanimously approved.

- c. **Newsletter/Brochures.** Pat Ready reported that the summer issue of the *Wisconsin Bluebird* was printed and mailed to members. He noted that we are low on the information packet, but we have a good supply of the trifold and reprint handouts.

Gene Birr asked for copies of the informational packet for a meeting. The Board discussed what resources could be provided to individuals, including the brochure and informational packet that BRAW normally charges for. Gene proposed taking the "10 Tips for Newbies" article and creating a single page flyer with the bluebird life cycle on the back. The Board would prefer to give out the tri-fold brochure instead.

Pat reported the Fall *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter information must be received by August 1<sup>st</sup> in order to print by August 8<sup>th</sup>. This schedule will help promote the fall convention.

- d. **Research.** Dave Lucey reported that there is ongoing research with House Sparrow deterrents, and he has mocked up a plastic guard that hangs from the roof of the nest box. Dave suggested we conduct research on this deterrent method. The Board discussed the difficulty of managing House Sparrow guards and predator guards concurrently, such as previous efforts with fishing line netting/curtains. Pat Ready shared that BRAW has studied and tried fishing line previously without success. The Board also discussed reaching out to the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) regarding similar House Sparrow research and the possibility of a research grant. Dave agreed to look into doing research next spring.
- e. **Website.** Webmaster Andy Garcia-Rivera was unable to attend the Meeting but provided his report by email. Garcia-Rivera asked that those who have current data (ranging from last year to date) about key BRAW accomplishments, ~~that they~~ please provide them to him. Examples include: (1) nest data numbers for this past year; (2) the number of new nest boxes built, sold, and given away from last year to today; (3) names and numbers of Nest in Peace program nest box deployments; (4) DALC activity numbers (such as boxes deployed, etc.); (5) the name and number of presentations given by Pat Ready; and (6) one or two BRAW success stories we are very proud of.

Garcia-Rivera reported that he has updated the website interface and has completed additional requests. He wants the Board to provide him with any important information that should be in the front page of the website.

- f. **Technology.** Mike Crawford did not have anything to report on Technology. Mike reported on the 2026 Garden Expo, as described in New Business.
- g. **Historian.** Gail Smith did not have anything to report.
- h. **County Contacts.** Gene Birr was not able to attend the meeting. No report was given.
- i. **Public Relations.** Gene Kroupa reported that NABS has requested to reprint one of BRAW's previous newsletter articles, plus has run an article about the DALC program. Also, the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology printed an article about the BRAW 2024 fledging data in their newsletter.

Gene shared that the next big public relations push will be the awards that will be given at the Fall Convention. Since the Madison and Milwaukee newspapers are difficult to work with, BRAW's most reliable publicity outlets are the newsletters of other organizations and local newspapers.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has agreed to publish a BRAW article, but President Sample emphasized that we cannot reprint an old article. President Sample will ask the WDNR if there is a specific topic they would like BRAW to write about. The Board discussed emphasizing that BRAW was started by the WDNR-

- h. **Data.** Steve Fallon was not able to attend the meeting, and no report was given.

## 7. Old Business.

- a. **Nest Box Replacement Program & Trail Builder Program.** The Board discussed revitalizing the Nest Box Replacement Program and the Trail Builder Program and potentially announcing the revitalization of both programs at the Fall Convention. This would save on shipping costs but would not raise funds for the programs if given out for free. There were additional discussions regarding selling boxes at the Fall Convention.
- b. **Speakers for Convention.** Steve Betchkle has not responded regarding our speaking request. David Drake has agreed but his topic is to be determined. Pat Ready agreed to give a talk about recent efforts but would be flexible. BOD discussed reaching out to Maryanne Nowak to talk about bird landscaping and habitats. Gene mentioned possibly finding a speaker on butterflies.
- c. **Nest Box Labels.** Board would like to add BRAW's new blue name tags to boxes on public properties such as golf courses, cemeteries, or public trails. Suggested that we offer the name tags at Convention and request a donation although not required because the tags give credibility to the boxes and are great for marketing BRAW to the public.
- d. **Treasurer Appointment.** Dan Schroeder was elected Treasurer by email approval, which is codified in the March Board Meeting Minutes.

## 8. New Business.

- a. **2026 Garden Expo Updates.** Registered for three tables at the Expo which will run from February 13<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup>. The booth cost of the early registration is \$450, plus a 10% levy on sales at the Expo. Because BRAW is a non-profit organization, we cannot request a location in the expo hall other than to be near other conservation organizations.
- b. **Policy and Specs.** Dave presented a draft policy about nest box specifications, including how the boxes should be constructed, what materials should be used, specifications on ventilation, and other items as described in the policy. Dave proposed adopting this policy. Motion was made by David Lucey and seconded by Mary Sobol, with an amendment to replace the word "must" with the word "should" referring to ventilation requirements. Motion was unanimously approved.
- c. **DALC Nest Boxes.** Gene reported that 160 free nest boxes, plus poles and predator guards, were given out to 53 landowners. Discussed the problems related to House Sparrows and wrens when providing boxes in urban areas. Thanks to everyone who helped put mounting clamps on the boxes, assemble poles and distribute the boxes, which were built by Gene Birr. Dave Lucey provided the predator guards.

- d. **Perry-Primrose Bird Conservation Area.** Gene discussed providing boxes for the Conservation Area and Winter Green properties and supplying monitors. The Board expressed concerns about Winter Green and emphasized that Perry-Primrose is more appropriate for bluebirds. Gene will let DALC know about its interest in working with them on the Primrose property.
  - e. **Fall Convention Update.** Ongoing discussions regarding the silent auction, lunch and scheduling speakers. Gail is handling the auction, Pat and Mary will be handling lunch, and Pat will be managing the speakers. Additionally discussed coffee and snacks in the morning, which Rita and her partner will manage.
  - f. **2025 Awards.** President Sample reported on the potential award recipients for 2025. The Board decided to rename the “Merit Award” to “Facilitator of the Year Award.” Mary suggested recognizing bluebirders based on the number of fledglings (i.e. 1-50, 51-100, 101-300, etc.), and Vice-President Branwell suggested expanding that to number of boxes monitored. The Board discussed developing specific criteria for each of the award categories and soliciting additional names for potential award recipients. Steve will order the plaques for the seven nominees agreed upon.
9. **Next Meeting.** The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be held Saturday, September 20, 2025, at the Waunakee Public Library with a start time of 9:15 a.m.
10. **Adjournment.** The board unanimously approved a motion by David Lucy and seconded by Mary Sobol to adjourn at 11:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Amy Harriman  
Acting Secretary