

Summer 2021  
Vol. 36, No. 2



# 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.

## Where Are the Bluebirds?

See Page 7, CC reports.



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## President's Message

Pat Ready has served effectively and with distinction as BRAW's president for over 6 years. He felt it was time to step down, but remains as a BRAW director. Actually, he has continued to serve our organization by offering his extensive expertise and also continues to serve as a county coordinator. We all owe him a large debt of gratitude.

Our organization is also very fortunate to have a Board of Directors and committee chairpersons that are committed to improving our efforts to help the Eastern Bluebird populations in the state. Faced with a declining numbers of trail monitors, a bold program to offer free nesting boxes to new members turned out to be a success, well, too much of a success really. Encouraged by Gene Kroupa, our membership chairperson, Valerie Van Winkle along with Mary Sobol taking on most of the mailings, sent out over 250 boxes to aspiring trail monitors across the state. BRAW could afford to do this thanks to a large extent to Steve Lang offering to build the houses at his material cost. A Herculean job by these dedicated

people to say the least. We hope that with the decline in monitors that the new members will help replace to a degree the reduced number of nesting boxes in our state. I'm looking forward to seeing the end of the season reports for this year.

You may also have noticed a huge change in our website. Andy Garcia-Rivera took on this task and has developed a premier website to say the least. If you haven't seen this, you need to visit it just to admire his work. Already lauded as possibly the best bluebird support website in the country by users in and outside our state, it offers just about everything to support trail monitors and people interested in the Eastern Bluebird. This is not a static site either. Andy continually updates and improves what is offered. Training videos are planned, too.

By the time that you read this, the nesting season will be well on its way. A note to our new monitors - don't fret about not seeing a great deal of success right away. Bluebirds often produce two clutches of eggs over a season and sometimes a third

may be realized. They are known to change nesting locations. You may be surprised as the season progresses. Don't hesitate to ask your county coordinator for assistance or contact a Board member for advice.

One last topic. Over the years we have been fortunate to have Board members from all over the state, but in recent years, most of us are from the southern portion of Wisconsin. Traveling great distances for meetings is an issue. We generally meet four times a year. While the pandemic has forced us to hold Board meetings using Zoom, it has worked out so well that we are going to continue to use Zoom even after the pandemic ends. That means, you can be a Director for BRAW without the inconvenience of traveling for Board meetings no matter where in the state you reside. Please consider helping us move forward and join our Board of Directors. Let me know, and I'll send you a brief description or talk with you about joining.

Bluebirds forever! Keep the faith.

**Steve Sample**

## Editor's Note

Back around 1998 or 1999 I was a volunteer at the Madison Audubon booth at the WHA Garden Expo in Madison. My friend Paul Noeldner and I were working on it together and took a break to walk about the exhibits. One of the displays we came to was the BRAW table. It had nest boxes on display and some showed how gnats were getting into boxes and killing chicks. We learned it was a Gary Gaard study/experiment he conducted on his own showed what was killing chicks.

Paul and I were about to walk on when Carol McDaniel came up and asked us if we were members? We both said "no" and she said there was a special offer if we joined during the Expo. We both signed up.

Carol was BRAW's president at the time and she alone was manning the display for the weekend.

I had been a member in the early



days of BRAW but didn't have much luck getting bluebirds and life got in the way so I hadn't been involved for many years.

From the night when I first met Carol I became interested in bluebird restoration again. A friend suggested I help her friend monitor a trail at Lake Kegonsa State Park. From then on I was hooked!

After receiving a few newsletters I began sending editor Don Bragg my photos of bluebirds and eventually wrote some articles as well.

When Don decided it was time to step down as editor of the WB he asked me if I'd like to take the job? How could I say no?

Actually I'm not really much of an editor as I am a graphic designer which is how I made my living for 35 years. Knowing about layout, computers, JPGs, Doc files and getting files to press were what I know.

Eventually I became a board member and have served with many wonderful people that helped make decisions about running BRAW.

For a few of those years I served

with Carol and John McDaniel when they decided to rejoin the board.

We became good friends and they even invited me down to give talks at the Lafayette Co. Bluebird Soc. Annual meeting. I told Carol she was the one who invited me to join BRAW all those years ago. She just smiled and said that was a long time ago.

I'm sorry to have to tell you that Carol passed away in early May from cancer. She will be missed by BRAW members and the bluebirds of Lafayette County!

It amazes me sometimes how one person can do so much in their lifetime that trickles down to affect so many others. She invited me to join BRAW and I became editor and also president of this organization for six years.

She truly was an amazing person.

May she rest in peace.

**Patrick Ready**  
Editor



# SHOW US YOUR BLUEBIRDS!

## Enter our member photo contest.



### Show Us Your Bluebirds!

Enter the BRAW 2021 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 1st.

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](mailto:birdsready@gmail.com).  
Subject line: BRAW Bluebird Contest

**No mail in photos please.**

## Future of Bluebirds in the Hands of Youth

By Sue Hall

It's been our pleasure to take young people on our route to help us monitor our bluebird trail. Joy and Kai Schuller accompanied us on our route last summer and were excited to get to see the chicks, the eggs and get to help determine how old they were with the "Aging form" provided by BRAW. They have also been involved in the bird banding workshop our Audubon Society provides for area youth where they get to watch birds being banded and get to release them into the area behind Schmeckle Reserve.

We have enjoyed installing EB houses in 8 area grade schools and gone on to teach the elementary children how to monitor them. This has led to several of the teachers taking over the routes and continuing to involve their students as well as establishing conservation of the birds. We have duplicated BRAW board member, Fred Craig's boxes, and display to let the children see how the nests and eggs look and the five main bird species that occupy them. We also have our display at the Children's Museum



in Stevens Point.

Our Audubon chapter has a permit with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to display the non-viable eggs and nests.

We also took our bird box displays to the Boston School forest, Mead Wildlife area with the Fall Family Festival in Milladore, and World Migration Bird Day at Iverson Park. These have been built by Audubon member, Bob Lane.

Through the past 15 years of monitoring my boxes, many young people



have accompanied me on my route. My next-door neighbor, Cassidy Crunkilton started with me when she was in sixth grade and although I thought she would stop when she got to Junior High, she continued through college and now has her own route of 12 boxes on their large farm where she now lives.

It has been my pleasure to work with youth and let the Wild shine in. *Kent & Sue Hall are former board members of BRAW.*

# Odd Bird Behavior This Covid-19 Year

By Barbie Allen

Last year with Covid-19, so many things had changed. Many monitors had trouble getting on golf courses that were closed to monitor their trails and others decided not to monitor at all. I noted many odd happenings last year while monitoring my bluebird trails.

We had a very unusual pair of bluebirds that nested in our yard. We have several birdhouses in our yard that is adjacent to several acres of farmland. This pair of bluebirds built a nest in our backyard bird house in late May. The bluebird hen stayed in the nestbox a lot more than normal and would hardly ever leave the nest even though there were yet no eggs. The male bluebird sat on a nearby perch watching guard and often feeding the female. The hen finally laid the first egg on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately there were wrens in the area and they removed this egg. The bluebird hen laid another egg the following day but again the wrens removed it. The next day she laid her third egg but the wrens still wanted this nestbox and removed the final egg leaving just sticks in the box. The wrens also destroyed the tree swallows' eggs and nest in another box near the field but they did not nest in either of these houses.

Fortunately the bluebird pair found the nestbox in our front yard and built a new nest. There were three beautiful blue eggs on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Checking this nestbox was very difficult as this pair were very protective of their nest, dive-bombing me every time I came near it. I decided to supplement their food with mealworms, as they didn't leave our yard much being overly protective of their nest. I attributed this to the wrens taking out their first attempted brood.

We have a wreath attached to our front door with a moon shaped window above it, with two flower bushes on each side of the door. The male bluebird would sit on the wreath staring into our living room, often pecking at the window letting us know they wanted more mealworms. The hen would sit on the bush. (See photos.) They would do this daily some-



bushes by the side of our front door. The house finches then abandoned this nest.

There was one nestbox where I found a lone bluebird egg but no nest just the egg and another nestbox with a wren nest and one bluebird egg in it. Neither of these boxes had any successful nestings.

It truly was a very difficult year with Covid-19 for everyone (including the birds), but I am thankful I had my bluebird monitoring to get me through it all. Hopefully things will be better in 2021!!

## **BRAW & Amazon Smile!**

Amazon has developed a way to support non-profit organizations such as **BRAW**. If you use Amazon, log into "<https://smile.amazon.com>" instead of amazon.com. You will need to select **BRAW** as your intended organization that you support by typing **Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin** in the appropriate line. **ALL ORDERS USING THIS LOGIN WILL GENERATE A PORTION OF YOUR PURCHASE TO BRAW!** The products purchased will cost you the very same as if you just log into their standard site. However, BRAW will receive 0.5% of your total purchase. It is easy and you will be supporting us without any additional cost to you.

times sitting for long extended periods of time. They did successfully fledge three chicks.

Other odd findings last year were five of my twelve trails had record first brood bluebird chicks but had no successful second broods. I also had many nests with cowbird dumped eggs involving seven nests in two separate trails in two different counties. The cowbirds did remove several of the bluebird eggs replacing them with their eggs. This helped contribute to my record amount of failed bluebird eggs. Cowbirds also egg-dumped an egg into a house finch nest in the



# Summer Happiness Is Bluebirds

By Gene Kroupa

Back in the 1950s, some folks were already putting up nest boxes for bluebirds. One of them was Ben Petkowski, a neighbor who owned about 20 acres and tended a large vegetable garden.

Surrounding it on two sides were an open pasture and an alfalfa field. Woods completed the perimeter.

Smack dab in the middle of the garden Ben had placed a bluebird nest box which brought him much joy, as his published letter to the local newspaper clearly indicated. Ben wrote:

*"A summer happiness [stet] is having a pair of bluebirds nest and rear a brood of young in a house that you made and put up."*

I found the clipping with Ben's quote when going through some old family files. Not only did it bring back memories of my youth, but the item also reminded me of things we need to do now to ensure a summer happiness for bluebirds. Among them are:

- 1. Clean out old nests.** If you haven't had a chance to remove old nests since the fledging of a first brood, do it now. A clean nest box will likely draw a bluebird pair for a second nesting. Remember to carry the nest debris some distance away so as not to attract predators to the refreshed nest box.
- 2. Cut the weeds.** By summer any horseweeds, thistles or other high growth plants might be tickling the bottom of some nest boxes, especially those along the edge of



pastures, golf courses, prairies and  
*Cleaning out nest boxes after first fledging can attract a second nesting pair. (Gene Kroupa)*

crop fields. Trimming back nearby undergrowth will also help keep critters and insects at bay.

- 3. Improve ventilation.** Make sure all vent openings are clear of debris. Possibly add a half-inch high wire platform at the bottom of the box. You can make the platform out of the same wire used for Noel predator guards. Cover skylight openings to reduce direct sunlight onto the nest. You can always uncover openings again if sparrows become a problem.
- 4. Discourage wrens.** Wrens can be a major challenge when preparing nest boxes for bluebirds' second nesting. Employ a wren guard that protrudes out front and over the entrance hole once bluebirds have laid a single egg. Keep in mind that wrens are a protected native species in Wisconsin.
- 5. Relocate old and put up new nest boxes.** Relocating nest boxes that are attracting sparrows and wrens is

a good idea if other solutions aren't working. Likewise, early summer is still a good time to put up new nest boxes. Bluebirds seem to welcome fresh digs at this time.

- 6. Deal with insects.** Ants, gnats and blowflies hanging around an old nest can discourage future residents. After thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting the nest box, treat the outside of the box and the mounting pole with a diluted solution (.5%) of Permethrin. Tacking a vanilla tree, commonly called car air fresheners, inside the box can help ward off gnats. The wire riser platform will also help keep blowflies from setting up camp at the bottom of any new nest.

And if the bluebirds are happy, we too will enjoy a summer happiness watching them rear a second brood in the safe home we provided for them.



*Kroupa's garden nest box brings back memories. (Gene Kroupa)*

## 2020 Data Corrections

Dear Monitors:

Here is a list of corrections for the year 2020. All of our monitors are important and I know that all are doing their best to help the birds. These additions bring our state totals up to nearly 21,000 bluebirds fledged! We appreciate all your efforts!

Thanks and regards,  
Steve Fallon  
BRAW Data Coordinator

Monitors	County	Bluebirds fledged:
Mark and Sue Martin	Columbia	36
Charlotte Lukes	Door	71
W Lukes	Door	40
B and M Madden	Door	10
Glenna Peters	Door	9
Bill Stehling	Sauk	164
Jim Goodno	Dane	21
Craig and Sheila Beyer	Waupaca	507
Ernie Schultz	Pierce	84

2020 EAB Total

20832

# BRAW Welcomes These Members

BRAW welcomes these new and returning members. For the Blues!  
 Leah Haas, Colby  
 Barb Jones, Shorewood  
 Kathleen Daley, Richfield  
 Chloe Daley, Richfield  
 Melanie Lee, Fitchburg  
 Lynne Lokken, East Troy  
 Tera Hollfelder, Spring Green  
 Lynn & Jeff Dodge, Phillips  
 Robert Skerven, Nekoosa  
 Ann Probst, Appleton  
 Robert Stanley, Middleton  
 Michael Lasceski, Rock Springs  
 Lori Paige, Manawa  
 Hubert Cole, Menomonie  
 James Bator, Fish Creek  
 Emily Benz, Plain  
 Rich Swanson, Eau Claire  
 Sally & Joe Felling, Colfax  
 James Haessly, Sauk City  
 Elizabeth Nies, Weyauwega  
 Heather Swanson, Hammond  
 Deb Hogan, Spring Green  
 Gretchen Reis, Tomah  
 John Hensey, Verona  
 Greg & Beth Goetzman, Peshtigo  
 Pamela Resech, Curtiss  
 Ashley Clarke, Medford  
 Ken Erfourth, Mount Horeb  
 Bob Lasky, Stevens Point  
 Michele Reinwald, Hustiford  
 Rachel Hartley, Burlington  
 Amy Dwyer, Ellison Bay  
 Elizabeth Carroll, Neenah  
 Ryan Bennett, Oconomowoc  
 Jeanne Jewell, Popular  
 Jerome Jewell, Brule  
 Ruth Oppedahl, Washburn  
 Derek Miller, Crivitz  
 Aaron Cullen, Platteville  
 Julie Harris, Deforest  
 Roger Villers, Saint Cloud  
 Erin Miller, DePere  
 Scrap it crafts/Tina's Treasures, Mukwonago  
 Melissa Moline, Saukville  
 Darci Thoune, La Crosse  
 Kent Haselow, Delafield  
 Mark Freidel, Deforest  
 Kathleen Bader, Cornell  
 Lindsay Steiner, LaCrosse  
 Josh Snortum, Black Creek  
 Jane Meissner, Crivitz  
 Justin Gloede, Neenah  
 Lissa Radke, Solon Springs  
 Gary Peterson, Grantsburg  
 Gina Malueg, Appleton



April MacNeill, Mason  
 Marilu Zoran, Madison  
 Hillary Neff, Madison  
 Molly Ticcioni, Thiensville  
 Elizabeth Stone, Arbor Vitae  
 DelRae Haag, Cameron  
 Leann Strasser, Waterford  
 Mande Gahm, Luck  
 Jeffrey Richardson, Milladore  
 Eric Manges, Wauwatosa  
 Marti & Dick Norton, Butte des Morts  
 Michael Olejniczak, Greenleaf  
 Dave Mudgett, Franklin  
 Mark McNally, Wauwatosa  
 George Jeffrey, Waukesha  
 Cynthia Saladino, Fremont  
 Brian Nelson, Prairie du Chien  
 Gregory Jenkins, Medford  
 Barbara Kuss, River Falls  
 James Heinen, Kewaskum  
 Dick & Shirley Behrendt, Whitefish Bay  
 Suzanne Papa, Garden Prairie, IL  
 Sue Barnhart, Wautoma  
 Geoffrey Kuhn, Oshkosh  
 Mary Doering, Fond du Lac  
 Wendy Abel, Verona  
 Janet Wissink, Pickett  
 James Marlow, Dodgeville  
 Timothy Baker, Columbus  
 Frederick Ochs, Menomonie  
 Nancy Hoffmann, Waukesha  
 Harry Platts, Kenosha  
 Mark Ott, Menasha  
 Susan Buechel, Oakfield  
 Michael Radke, Drummond  
 Tyrone & Laura Larson, Amherst  
 Kim Schiebe & Gus Eberhardt, Hixton  
 Lauren Pemberton, Fitchburg  
 Marcel Kjolrie, Lodi  
 Thomas Erie, Stoughton  
 Nancy Hoesly, Waterloo  
 Wayne Wegner, Brookfield  
 Mary Kind, Oshkosh  
 Sheila Voss, De Forest  
 Linda Reynolds, Milwaukee  
 Margaret Riley, Cross Plains  
 Julie Irwin, New Richmond

Dick Van Grinsven, Chilton  
 Nancy Herbers, Holmen  
 Linda Merwin, Boscobel  
 Anne Gamoke, Plymouth  
 Larry Johnson, Fond du Lac  
 Frank Bradley, Denmark  
 Roger Janson, Plymouth, MA  
 Woodville Community Library, Woodville  
 Duane Schwab, Whitewater  
 Bill Zimar & Sue Neitzel, Pickett  
 Donald Deppert, West Bend  
 Howard Aprill, Wehr Nature Center, Franklin  
 Edward Curran, Brandon  
 Jan Gavin, Hudson  
 Charles Lepinski, Berlin  
 Phillip & Donna Lind, Pine River  
 Ruth & Scott Canfield, Blanchardville  
 Michele Klister, Rubicon  
 Bill & Kay Montgomery, River Falls  
 Gary Kleppe, Monroe  
 Barb Blow, Minocqua  
 Pat Van Daalwyk, Union Grove  
 Wes Schroeder, Oconto  
 Judith Bubolz, Ladysmith  
 Pam Shefchik, Franklin  
 Michael Cahill, Mount Horeb  
 John Clapsaddle, Liberty, MO  
 Richard Gunderson, Eleva  
 Elizabeth Marti, Sauk City  
 Thomas Skarda, Green Bay  
 Michelle Muetzel, Oshkosh  
 Julie Murken, Green Bay  
 Joy & Kai Schuller, Stevens Point  
 Norman Lange, Rubicon  
 Ken Jalowitz, Withee  
 Stephanie Wesloh, Conover  
 Charlene Parlier, Merrill  
 Paul Dolata, Ripon  
 Dr. Dennis Hulbert, Florence  
 David & Patti Becker, Stevens Point  
 Barbara Ramlow, Kentucky  
 Lenor Coe, Clinton  
 Brooke Lewis, Barneveld  
 Eric Olson, Stevens Point  
 Stan Parsons, Mauston  
 Kymberly Berendsen, Seymour  
 Cynthia Lorentzen, Franklin  
 Mary Hitchcock, DePere  
 Rose Basche, Green Bay  
 Nancy Mary Siebers, DePere  
 Jeanne Flickinger, Poynette  
 Joyce Playter, Eau Claire  
 Rebecca Haglund, Oregon  
 John & Chris Zillmer, Green Bay  
 Molly Winder, Green Bay  
 Deborah Stephansen, Twin Lakes

## Summer 2021

### Donations

Barbara Ramlow, \$30 *In Memory of Judith Carlson Wesolaski*  
 Leo Hoefgen, \$ 25  
 Leah Haas, \$5  
 Michael Mikos, \$25 nest box  
 Lynne Lokken, \$15 nest box  
 Lynn & Jeff Dodge, \$20 nest box  
 Patricia Hermsen, \$ 60  
 Lori Paige, Manawa, \$25  
 Emily Benz, \$15 nest box  
 Rich Swanson, \$25  
 Sally & Joe Felling, \$15 nest box  
 Tony Drexler, \$5  
 Gretchen Reis, \$30 nest box  
 John Hensey, \$30  
 Ken Erfourth, \$15 nest box  
 Ruth Oppedahl, \$20  
 Jane Meissner, \$10  
 Lanny Hevey, \$5  
 Cynthia Saladino, \$15 nest box  
 Gregory Jenkins, \$25 nest box  
 James Kewaskum, \$25  
 Dick & Shirley Behrendt, \$50 nest box  
 Mark Ott, \$10  
 Kim Marshall, \$15 nest box  
 Susan Buechel, \$20  
 Wayne Wegner, \$30 nest box  
 Linda Reynolds, \$25  
 Larry Johnson, \$5  
 Debra Walters, \$25  
 Gene Birr, \$85  
 Jan Gavin, \$15 nest box  
 Mike Moran, \$20  
 Carolyn & David Mertens, \$50  
 Frank Bradley, \$25  
 Ruth Kleban, \$25 nest box  
 Carol Meland, \$10  
 Richard Gunderson, \$25  
 Julie Murken, \$15 nest box, \$10 research  
 Elaine Severin, \$10  
 Jim & Anna Kraft, \$10  
 Sue Hall, \$15 nest box  
 Norman Lange, \$35  
 Dr. Dennis Hulbert, \$15 nest box  
 David & Patti Becker, \$25  
 David Roberts, \$20  
 Edward Miller, \$30 nest box  
 Ken Jalowitz, \$100  
 Renee Pierce, \$10  
 Della & Gerald Clabots, \$125



# BRAW CC News

## Summer 2021

By Gene Birt

It appears as of this writing in early May that the bluebirds are arriving as slowly as good spring weather is. Most local monitors here in northeast Wisconsin are reporting seeing far less bluebirds than usual this early in the season. Others are reporting many more chickadees than normal, some having them nesting in their boxes for the first time. Meanwhile, tree swallows seem to be claiming every box not occupied yet by the absent bluebirds.

County Coordinators that do not yet have email are reminded that they can always send me their reports of bluebird nesting or activities involving other monitors at any time, whether or not they are notified by mail, and I will include their reports in the following newsletter. Also remember that President Steve Sample has materials for anyone wishing to sign up new members, including a special membership form list to help record the names, addresses and emails of prospective new members, and special BRAW buttons and decals to hand out at any bluebird presentation you may give or attend. I used one of these recently at the Green Bay Wild Birds Unlimited store where I answered questions about bluebirds for attendees and signed up 6 new BRAW members. Membership Chair Val Van Winkle can also provide you with additional Information Packets you may need and answer any questions about new memberships and special offers that BRAW may be running presently.

### Door Co., Charlotte Lukes

Here in Door County things are depressingly quiet on the bluebird front. It is nearly the end of April and I have seen very few bluebirds. We have had so many cold days with northeast winds off Lake Michigan and there are so few insects out that birds have little to eat. I will do my first full check of the 22 boxes on my trail this Sunday. I have heard from a couple monitors and they, too, are not seeing any bluebirds.

Dear Bluebird Monitors,  
The news about bluebird mortalities during the deep freeze in the south last February is sad. There are fewer sightings of them returning to our area. The cold month of April with many days of north winds did not help, either.

I did my first check of the 22 boxes on my trail yesterday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, and found only 9 empty boxes. There were 4 complete nests and 6 with nests started. Two nests had eggs; one with 5 warm bluebird and one with 3 cold white eggs.

Sometimes bluebirds lay white eggs and they will be cold until the entire clutch is laid (one egg per day). So I will check that box again in about 4 days to see if they are warm with incubation.

There were 4 chickadee nests in boxes that normally had bluebirds. That's more BCC nests than I have ever had. One box had a nest started with several white feathers in it, typical of tree swallows. I have not seen a tree swallow yet, but a few reports are coming in.

No matter which species uses the boxes it is important to allow them to be successful. However, I do not like house wrens and have moved many boxes out of wren territory over the years due to changes in habitat (more bushes filling the open landscape).

Please tell me of your findings as this slow spring rolls on. The Climate Prediction Center is forecasting a colder and slightly wetter than normal month of May.

Wishing all of us a warmer season.

I just checked the box that had 3 cold white eggs last Thursday and today there are 5 warm eggs in it. So I have two active bluebird nests with hens incubating.

This morning I saw the first hummingbird in my yard as well as the first male Baltimore oriole on the feeder. Let's hope more south winds will move in the bluebirds.

### Iowa Co., Dale Moody

We had a nest hatching April 22 with 4 new hatchlings and 1 egg yet to hatch. 2 others on nests we did not disturb and several others with eggs (Iowa Co.)

Lafayette Co today had nests with

4 and 5 eggs and another complete nest and 3 chickadee nests!!!! 1 with 1 egg. VERY unusual for us! Not sure if we ever had a successful chickadee hatch!!

Good luck finding bugs!!

### Kewaunee Co., Don Pritzl

Don is reporting to me that he too has seen very few bluebirds this spring and more chickadees also. During the checking of his 58 box trail the first week in May he reported only finding 3 bluebird nests. In a regular year he usually has 12 to 15 bluebirds by now. Similarly, he often only gets one nest of chickadees but this year has 4 already. He says it is disturbing and very unusual to find so few bluebirds this season.

### Eau Claire Co., Rita Gundry

It's looking like the black-capped chickadee is the songbird of the year, happily inhabiting 10 of my 30 bluebird nestboxes!

The bleak news from southern U.S.A. this past winter, enumerating bluebird losses, will cause me to be extra vigilant as I monitor my trails. Fellow bluebirder and brother, Larry Liegel, and I, worked with new BRAW member, Rachel Urban, recently. We set up a new trail in an Eau Claire city park. Her first nestbox occupant was....you guessed it.... A black-capped chickadee!

I am hearing comments from neighbors and others, not involved in BRAW, about the reduction in bluebird numbers they are seeing this spring. We can't control the weather, but we can control how we react to this unfortunate situation and do the best we can for the blues.

### Oconto Co., Gene Birt

Like so many other coordinators and local monitors reporting to me, I am finding an extremely disappointing number of bluebirds nesting in my boxes. While monitoring my trails of more than a hundred boxes during the first week in May, I have recorded only 8 pair of bluebird nesting with only 5 of them having eggs and one nest with week-old chicks. One year ago I had already recorded 29 bluebird nests with 74 eggs by this time. Normally, I record 2 or 3 chickadee

nests during an entire season, but now I already have 7 nests and 5 of them have eggs. With the return of wrens and the swallows just beginning to nest, it is quite likely this will result in a very low number of bluebirds fledging, as House Sparrows also seem greater in number this spring. This great absence of bluebirds has created the opportunity for the other cavity nesting songbirds to occupy many more of the nest boxes than they otherwise would.

In late April, I joined monitor Sue Cashman from Pulaski in re-working a long-neglected trail in the prairie garden at Sunnyside School in the town of Chase that had been established by a local cub scout troop. This garden with benches, informational sign posts and abandoned birdhouses was created many years ago and had apparently never been monitored. Every one of the 10 birdhouses we removed had sparrow nests from multiple years. We replaced these with 6 new NABS-style houses equipped with Skylights, hoping to lessen the House Sparrow problem.

In early May, Cordula Van Den Heuvel, Al Powers, and others from Bird City Oconto helped me remove a 15 box bluebird trail we had set up about 8 years ago at the former Oconto Golf Course, which had just been sold to a housing developer. As good luck would have it, we learned that the nearby Oconto Sportsman Club was interested in having birdhouses erected on their 300-acre property and were open to having our golf course boxes and possibly more placed there and this was done on May 7.

On March 27 I was invited to appear at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Green Bay to meet with their customers and answer questions about bluebirds. I was able to introduce them to BRAW and sign up 6 new members.

In **Brown County**, Della Clabots has been working to recruit new members by providing them with nest boxes, bluebird information and teaching them how to monitor trails. Together they are monitoring new trails at the Pittsfield Town Hall and the Mountain Bay Trail. She reports that she too has seen only about half of the bluebird

nests that she had last year on her 35 box trail in Howard and Suamico.

#### **Dane Co., Patrick Ready**

A few garden clubs asked me to do my Attracting Eastern Bluebirds & Other Cavity Nesters program. Some members had seen me talk at the WHA Garden Expo and wanted their members to hear about bluebirds and the rest.

Got a few request for trail renovations and helped out by moving or replacing nest boxes to better locations. Wrens & House Sparrows seem to be the main issue. Now a lack of bluebirds is the problem! As of mid-May I have 1 bluebird nest, 1 chickadee nest with 4 chicks, 1 Tree Swallow nest with 4 eggs and more Tree Swallows building in available boxes.

This summer I have 2 live presentations to do in the Madison area. One is at Lake Farms County Park, Talking Bluebirds for their Summer Sessions program on June 17.



The other program involves walking a Bluebird Trail for the Natural Heritage Foundations members that sign up ahead of time. I did this 2 years ago and had a good response with around 15 attending. We meet at the UW Arboretum and check the trail as I talk about cavity nesters emphasizing bluebirds of course!

#### **Outagamie Co., Steve Mayer**

Steve and Gene helped Wendy Bekx repair boxes and add skylights to boxes at her trails at the Hortonville golf course and the Lions Park in Greenville on Easter weekend.

#### **Dodge Co., Holly Bartholmai**

90 nest boxes (not all placed for Bluebirds) were checked on 4-29 and 4-30-21. Ten had nesting material compatible with Bluebirds in them. Of these nests, six had Bluebird eggs, and one had young that were one to



two days old. It was noted that a good number of the other nest boxes were occupied by Chickadees with eggs in a nest of down and moss.

All these photos were taken in Oakwood Cemetery in Dodge CO, WI on 4-29 and 4-30-21.

This photo is of 5 one to two day old Bluebird nestlings photographed on April 29th at Oakwood Cemetery in Beaver Dam, WI, -Dodge Co.

**County Coordinators are needed for several counties.** Contact Gene Birr (gbbird22@gmail.com 920-826-7552) for more information if you are interested in being a CC. The job is simple: spread the news about bluebird recovery in Wisconsin!



# *In Recognition & Appreciation*



Bluebird  
Restoration  
Association of  
Wisconsin

The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin extends its appreciation for providing habitat to support the conservation of Wisconsin's Eastern Bluebirds to



*Steve Sample*

Steve Sample, President, BRAW, Inc.



Trail Monitor

2021 Season

## Appreciation Certificates Available

I would like to make trail monitors aware that BRAW Certificates of Appreciation are available at no cost to our members. If you monitor a trail on a golf course, cemetery, park or other location that you would like to recognize for their support of your trail, we will provide you with a certificate suitable for framing. Just send me the location name and how you would like your name to appear and we will mail one to you. You can email me the information at [ssample@gmail.com](mailto:ssample@gmail.com) or for regular mail – Steve Sample, 422 Shepard Ter., Madison, WI 53705, 708/606-8070.

## Attracting Purple Martins

**Educate Yourself. Learn everything you can about Purple Martins.** Visit the web site [www.purplemartin.org](http://www.purplemartin.org) of the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA).

**Choose the Right Location.** Martin housing should be in the center of the largest open spot available, about 30-120 feet from human housing.

**Put Up Manageable Housing.** Your chances for success will be better if your housing is easy to manage. Choose a pole that telescopes, or is equipped with a winch or rope & pulley, and housing that has easy access to the compartments.

**Open Housing at the Right Time.** At



active sites, the first martins usually return within a week or two of the previous years' arrival dates.

**Increase Your Chances.** Offer a combination of houses and gourds. Play a dawn song recording. Add a Purple Martin decoy or two.

**Don't Close it Too Soon.** Keep your house open until late August, as fledglings will be searching for next year's breeding sites in late summer.

**Protect Your Housing from Predators.** Once you attract Purple Martins, don't assume that because you never see any predators there are none around, so install a pole guard, too. External guards on the housing itself protect against aerial raids by hawks, owls, and crows.

**Conduct Weekly Nest Checks.** Nest checks will not cause martins to abandon their young. Record your data.

# Membership Renewal Information

By Valerie Van Winkle, Membership Services

If the address label of your *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter reads Summer 2021 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 August and will be mailed in September. Memberships received after August 15 may not be processed in time to receive the Fall 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](http://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

Membership/Subscription contribution:

- \$10 Gift Membership (Online via email)
- \$15 Student/Teacher (Online via email)
- \$20 Online paperless issue via email**
- \$25 Individual or Family Annual (hard copy mailed)
- \$100 Corporate Annual
- \$300 Life Membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

County of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

\$15 to nest box construction with post & predator guard

\$100 for nest box trail

\$\_\_\_\_\_ for bluebird research

In addition to my membership contribution, I wish to contribute: \$\_\_\_\_\_

*(Contributions to BRAW are tax deductible)*

Check appropriate boxes:

This is a new subscription/membership

This is a renewal.

This is a GIFT subscription.

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](mailto:ripvws@gmail.com).**

**A BRAW subscription makes  
a great Anytime gift!  
\$10 includes Online Newsletter  
Give the gift of Bluebirds!**

## BRAW ELECTED & APPOINTED OFFICERS

**President Steve Sample**, 422 Shepard Ter., Madison, WI 53705 • 708/606-8070 • ssample@gmail.com (term to 12/22)

**Secretary Gene Kroupa**, 1010 Tumalo Trail, Madison, WI 53711 • 608/238-3571 • gkroupa@tds.net (term to 12/22)

**Treasurer Dan Schroeder**, N4028 Morgan Drive, Waupaca, WI 54981 • 920-475-8525 • brdanjoe@gmail.com (term to 12/22)

**Director Steve Fallon**, 974 Halcyon Days Ct., Oregon, WI 53575 • stevefall50@gmail.com (term to 12/21)

**Director Dave Lucey**, Cross Plains, WI • 53528 • dklucey@chorus.net(term to 12/22)

**Director Kris Perlberg**, 208 Johnson Street, Stoughton, WI 53589 • (608)698-9318 • kperlberg@gmail.com (term to 12/22)

**Director Mary Sobol**, 5205 Broadhead St., McFarland WI 53558 • 608-838-6962 (H) 608-338-8529 (cell) msobolontime@gmail.com (term to 12/22)

**Director Mike Crawford**, 817 5th St. Waunakee, WI 535397 608-213-1806 • mike@marieandmike.com (term to 2021)

**Director Patrick Ready**, (Past President) 815 Sky Ridge DR., Madison, WI 53719 • 608/239-0791 • birdsready@gmail.com (term to 12/21)

### APPOINTED OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:

**Data Collection Officer: Steve Fallon** (see above)

**Public Relations: Steve Sample** (see above)

**County Coordinator Chair: Gene Birr**, 722 E. Frontage Rd., Little Suamico, WI 54141 • gbbird22@gmail.com • (920) 826-7552

**Funding: Dan Schroeder** (see above)

**WI Bluebird Editor: Patrick Ready** (see above)

**Membership: Valerie Van Winkle**, PO Box 628492, Middleton, WI 53562 • ripvws@gmail.com

**Promotions: Gene Kroupa** (see above)

**Student and Youth Outreach Committee: Co-Chairpersons: Lowell Peterson**, 1860 45th St., Somerset, WI 54025 • 715/247-3243; and, **Mary Holleback**, 720 Madison St., West Bend, WI 53095-4136 • 262/335-9843

**Website: Andy Garcia Rivera**, agarciarivera@gmail.com

### BRAW LIAISONS:

**Bureau of Endangered Res. Liaison: Sumner Matteson**, DNR, 101 S. Webster St. PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53701 • 608/266-1571

**WSO Liaison: Jennifer Wenzel** • miloloki@wi.rr.com • 262-488-8077

## Supporting BRAW – Bluebirds and Greenbacks

There are many ways that our eastern bluebirds can be helped. Building trails for them is certainly one way to do it. But contributing funds to BRAW is another way! Ken Jalewitz of Withee, WI, is one of many people who have been doing both.

Ken, who monitors about 50 bluebird nest boxes on his farm, and has a love for bluebirds, has recently decided to set aside some “greenbacks” for BRAW in a Certificate of Deposit (CD) with his bank. By attaching a “Transfer on Death” to it, these funds will transfer over to BRAW at some point in the future, and will be used to further the development of bluebird trails and research needed to better understand our bluebirds and other cavity nesting friends.

Consider this idea for BRAW in your estate planning! It will be very much appreciated! Remember to always consult with a tax attorney or lawyer before establishing an estate planning tool. Eligibility of these future gifts as tax-deductible depends on IRS regulations.

Dan Schroeder  
BRAW Treasurer

## Monitoring Forms Are Available On Our Website

A very useful tool when monitoring nest boxes is Form 22. This form can be used for each nest box you monitor and you can record each week’s findings. Then you can tell the status of each box as you make your rounds week to week.

Look for it under the **Monitoring a Trail** heading. The PDF file can be opened and printed as needed. You can find other useful trail monitoring forms and info there as well. Go to **braw.org**

FORM 22  
Individual Nestbox Weekly Field Record  
Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc.

Field name: _____							Box Number
Monitor	Week	Occupied	Empty	Success	Failure	Notes	
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th		

Form 22: Individual Nestbox Weekly Field Record (Revised 3/17)

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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**  
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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

Patrick Ready  
815 Sky Ridge Dr.  
Madison, WI 53719  
www.braw.org



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## Life cycle of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) by Patrick Ready.



Pair select box and female builds the nest.



Within a week or two 3-5 eggs are usually laid in the nest.



The male stands guard.



After 13-14 days of incubation the chicks hatch.



After 16-22 days old the chicks are ready to fledge.



The chicks grow quickly being fed by both parents.