

Fall 2020
Vol. 35, No. 3



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.

2020 Data Requested

See Page 2



© Patrick Ready

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A Word from the Prez



Last time I wrote, my final comment was I really need to get a haircut. For those of you who were waiting in suspense all these months you will be happy to know I had one in early June.

Now that I got that out of the way, let's get down to business.

The bluebird nesting season is over so now is the time to get your data turned into BRAW. We accept data from one box in a backyard

to large trails monitored by individuals or conservation groups. All numbers are important even if you didn't get bluebirds. You should report whatever cavity nester used your nest box. Here in my backyard on Madison's west side, I fledged black-capped chickadees and house wrens. Two of my four trails had good bluebird results. Second broods did much better than first again this season. The cold spring weather, the black flies and sudden early summer heat seemed to take their toll. I do spray my boxes for black flies so the weather seems to be the main reason. After more than 20 years of trail monitoring, I haven't been able to control that yet!

I did hear from a few monitors who decided not to check boxes this year due to the pandemic. Understandable. We don't want anyone to take uncomfortable risks. For me it was a relief to get out on my bike and ride my two trails in city parks. I'm not good at staying indoors! Birding and blue-birding are my favorite hobbies even during these



pandemic times. Of course I practice safety at all times.

On one of my birding adventures I discovered a bluebird pair feeding their young at Lake Kegonsa State Park. The cover photo and this one were taken while sitting in my car about 30 feet away.

It is very disappointing we had to cancel the Annual Convention this fall. It is still too soon to know how things will go in the next 3-6 months. The hope is to have the Annual Convention in April if we can do so safely. Location will be at the Bay Beach Reserve in Green Bay. Tentative date is April 10. More info will be in the next *Wisconsin Bluebird*. The 2020 BRAW Awards will be revealed in the next newsletter.

Stay safe and don't forget to vote.

Patrick Ready
BRAW President

Please Send in Your 2020 Data!

By Steve Fallon, Data Collection

The BRAW EZ Summary Form is what you need to fill out so we can include your results for this nesting season in our data report. If you keep good records of your monitoring results throughout the season it should only take 5 minutes to fill out the form. Then you can decide how you want to submit it. You can mail it, or send the information to the email address at the bottom of the form. **If you choose to email it you will have to type the information into your message.** Make sure you include the required information from the card.

DEADLINE: September 30.

The next page has copies of the EZ Form. It's also available as a download on the website - www.braw.org. **You can also fill in the form (2020 EZ Form) and submit it directly from our website!**

For a paper version, fill it out (one per county) and mail it to:

Data Summary Director

974 Halcyon Days Ct., Oregon, WI. 53575

Email to:

wisconsinbluebirds@gmail.com

or use the **2020 EZ Form** on our website: www.braw.org

If you've noticed any errors or omissions in the data, please let me know as soon as possible. We'll print corrections in a subsequent issue.

Please note: If you are reporting data and part of a large trail make sure the data only gets reported to us one time. If you want individual recognition for your trail monitoring effort, send BRAW your data report but make sure your trail manager doesn't include your info in their report to BRAW.

BRAW EZ Summary Form

Use this card to report your nest box results for the season.
DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 30. 2020

_____ No. of boxes* _____ Boxes used by Bluebirds*
_____ Bluebird eggs laid _____ Bluebird eggs hatched
_____ Bluebirds fledged * _____ Tree Swallows fledged
_____ Chickadees fledged _____ House Wrens fledged

"I did not disturb any Chickadee, Tree Swallow or House Wren nests."

*County _____ Year: _____

*Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*Phone (_____) - _____

*email: _____

* Required data. Please provide any other data or information.

Comments: _____

EZ Summary data can be emailed to: wisconsinbluebirds@gmail.com
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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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*email: _____

* Required data. Please provide any other data or information.

Comments: _____

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County Coordinator News

By Gene Birr, CC Chair

The dwindling days of this beautiful summer may remind us to recount the joys and disappointments we each have experienced this bluebird nesting season. I hope as you read these accounts from some of our coordinators that you are reminded of similar concerns that you have faced this summer and the successes and unique events you've witnessed during your weekly trail monitoring.

I'm taking this opportunity to announce that the name of **Walworth County CC, John Scholtz** was mistakenly omitted from the CC list in the summer newsletter. His contact info: johenscholtz@hotmail.com, ph. 262-672-1657, W. 3097 Krueger Rd., Lake Geneva WI 53147. I'd like to thank him for his years of service as a coordinator and apologize for the error.

In addition, **Jim Hess** has agreed to serve as the County Coordinator for **Grant and Lafayette** counties. Jim also serves as the representative to the North American Bluebird Society from the Lafayette County BS and fills these positions formerly held by **Carol McDaniel**. He can be reached at jimhess5599@gmail.com or www.bluebirdhouse.org. Ph. 608-288-8662.

County Coordinators are reminded to send their quarterly reports of the monitoring activities in their area so that they are received here **five weeks before the first of the month of each quarter, namely March, June, September and December**. These can be sent to me via e-mail or letter whether or not you receive a reminder each time.

WASHINGTON COUNTY, Mary Holleback

In April I reported on the only BB workshop we were able to hold this spring. It was held on Sat. March 14th just before the governor's orders came out to limit group activities in the state. 13 people attended including a couple of grandparents with grandchildren. It was a nice family activity! Our trail at Riveredge Nature Center and those of several other area monitors have been pretty productive this

year. The weather has been very cooperative - not too cold or hot & not too rainy. No exact numbers yet. Maybe in a month.

A nice article about bluebirds & BRAW came out in the Journal Sentinel on June 28. Pat Ready & I were interviewed. Here's the link <https://www.jsonline.com/story/life/home-garden/2020/06/25/wisconsins-bluebird-comeback-beautiful-native-bird-thriving/3135500001/>



DANE COUNTY, Patrick Ready

Eagle Scouts often contact me about nest box projects. This summer scout Patrick Monahan emailed me about making nest boxes for Dane County trails. He saw a few that looked old and thought he could help by making new boxes. Scouts usually want to set up new trails then a year later they go off to college and leave the trails unmonitored. It was nice to hear of Patrick's plan to make boxes to replace old ones. I had him contact a few area trail monitors to see what they needed and I told him what I could use. He made his proposal to his scout leaders and got the okay to proceed. He sent me a photo (above) of a box he made for his parents. This fall he will build NABS Style boxes and get them delivered to three of us monitors that will replace a few old ones before winter sets in. A win-win for all of us!

The article about BRAW and bluebirds in the Journal Sentinel generated a few calls and emails from around the state. Some looking for advice on how to go about getting bluebirds to their yards or getting a small trail set up. But most were interested in the metal hole protectors that were mentioned. It said BRAW sold them so they wanted to know why they weren't available on

our website? Well we do sell them but only at the Garden Expo and the Annual Convention. We don't intend to go into the mail order business. Wild Birds Unlimited stores and some online stores sell them for around \$3 each. It was good to get bluebirds in the news and I thank Jennifer Rude Klett for writing it.

SHAWANO COUNTY, Ruthann Meiers

I monitor a trail in Shawano County. This has been an exceptional year here for bluebirds. Not only did I have one box with seven eggs that eventually fledged, I had another box with six eggs with the same result. I did have one box with sparrows, however, after removing that nest a couple of times, a bluebird eventually did move in.

PIERCE COUNTY, Jim Beix

I live in the northern part of the Driftless Area of Western WI. One can anticipate Black Flies or "buffalo gnats" biting nestlings to death in June and into early July. I had lost many nestlings to Black Flies last year when I did not anticipate Black Fly predation.

This year I put a 1" folded square of Bounce fabric in each nest box, before any egg laying, anticipating the Black Fly females looking for blood meals from hatchlings. Thumb-tacked to the wall of the nest box, I had heard this would repel the Black Flies.

Bounce fabric softener has been reported as a mosquito repellent for humans when a sheet is carried in a shirt pocket. Kansas State Professor Raymond Cloyd reported Bounce repelling Fungous Gnats found in indoor and green house plant soil. The Bounce fabric contains Linalool (an alcohol with a flower fragrance) that repels Fungous Gnats. The other ingredient in Bounce is Citronella that repels mosquitos. I could not find literature supporting Linalool repelling "buffalo gnats." I do not know how reliable Bounce fabric would be on its own for nestling protection.

Kent Hall of UW- Stevens Point has written about Black flies and given recommendations for BRAW monitors. He advised Permethrin Poultry Insecticide diluted to .5% solution in a spray bottle for spraying the nest

base, and walls of the nest box. I didn't want to take any chances this year so I began using Permethrin in addition to the Bounce. I avoided spraying the eggs but sprayed the box wall and bottom of the nest as soon as eggs were laid. I repeated the spraying each week until the chicks were ready to fledge. I lost no hatchlings nor chicks to Black Flies this season. Anticipating Black Flies each summer in our Driftless Area of Wisconsin one has to have the diluted Permethrin spray at hand.

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY,

Rita Gundry

This report was written by **Larry Liegel**, my brother and BRAW member, also an experienced bluebirder. I have trails in two different counties: in Eau Claire (West-Central) and **Sauk** (South-Central) Wisconsin. Here are some observations for my experiences in monitoring my BB trails.

1. This year was the first year ALL my nest boxes had NOEL guards. I want to thank the gentleman who distributed those devices at the last BRAW meeting. I am convinced!
2. Black flies (gnats) are no longer a problem on my trails, especially in Sauk County where there are many clear water trout streams where black gnats thrive. I spray all my boxes occupied by BBs, every week with Permethrin solution and I clean and sanitize box with same. It is especially useful after a tree swallow family fledges...as we know, they are very messy. Permethrin kills ants on contact, especially effective if infestation occurs while nestlings are present. I always spray down the post and PVC guard to discourage their travel route. Permethrin is another remedy discovered by a BRAW member who has saved hundreds of nestlings statewide!! Kudos to BRAW!
3. I built a few Troyer sparrow-resistant boxes the last couple of years. This spring, I installed one where I knew bluebirds were present, but I had yearly problems with house sparrows. This year, a BB pair occupied that box and fledged six birdies the first cycle and, just last week, fledged four the second cycle. No sparrows bothered the

bluebirds.

4. In Sauk County this year, I did lose two clutches of eggs that were laid in early April when a 17 degree night occurred during the week-long cold snap. I believe the eggs were rendered infertile when they froze. But, we saved three other clutches by using 24-hour chemical hand warmers, thanks to two of my brothers, who pitched in for me during that time.
5. I occasionally hear from people who don't clean out and sanitize their boxes after fledging occurs or after a failed nesting. In all honesty, I have seen where bluebirds do build new nests on top of old nests, BCC moss nests on top of house wren sticks. I tell those, I am convinced a clean box encourages re-nesting by BBs raising two broods in the same year. So many uninformed people do not realize BBs nest twice and sometimes three times per year.
6. Because the early spring weather delayed the 2020 BB nesting season, I have had many more tree swallows and house wren nestings and fledges. But, my trails have produced the most second broods for bluebirds than any of my previous 6 years as a member of BRAW.
7. Now, if someone could invent a black bear -proof nest box, that would be dynamite! A wood box assembled with construction screws is like tearing up newspaper to a bear!
8. Late this spring, I had four consecutively placed boxes vandalized on my trail in the Sky Park Industrial Center in Eau Claire. The boxes were opened and the closure peg was on the ground by every box. This was intentional and was not a raccoon. Two of the boxes had nests and one had nestlings which were removed or fell from the nest and their carcasses were next to the post. This happened after schools and businesses were closed due to COVID-19, so lots of people idled. Fortunately, none of these boxes was occupied by bluebirds, but other species suffered losses.

OCONTO COUNTY, Gene Birr

Our beautiful summer weather with its ample rains and moderately warm

temperatures, seem to be resulting in very good bluebird fledgling numbers on my trails here in NE Wisconsin.

A flourish of late second nestings and my first third- brood nest since 2012 are helping to produce nearly 300 bluebirds, which will make this season my fourth highest ever and the best I have had in the last 5 years.

Another high point has been finding a new monitor who has been enthusiastic and eager to learn everything he can about bluebirds after locating me as a county coordinator on our BRAW website in early May. Rob Senner readily agreed to follow me several times while checking my 9-box trail on the grounds of Oconto Falls High School, then he is taking over the trail monitoring duties for the rest of the year and sending me a report each week.

He also requested that I install a nest box at his nearby rural home which I later set up in mid- June. By early July he reported that a bluebird pair had chosen his nestbox site and now is hosting 4 eggs.

I continued last year's test of using skylight boxes by replacing the remaining boxes at the high school with skylight boxes this year. I am happy to report that there were no sightings of House Sparrows at all in the 9 boxes there, even though I had always trapped 4 to 6 sparrows each of the last 5 years from that trail.

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.

Could YOU be a County Coordinator?

By Gene Birr, CC Chair

Since BRAW's founding, the goal of increasing bluebird numbers has been helped greatly by a few dedicated individuals who have chosen to do even more than simply put up and watch a single nest box.

Those who are most passionate about helping others learn all the little things that make a bluebird nest box trail successful have often chosen to take on the role of a County Coordinator.

Coordinator Activities

Some of our coordinators simply list themselves as a contact person in their county so anyone can call them and ask a question about bluebirds. The coordinator can also advise them about where to find additional information, resources and materials to get started with a single bluebird nest box or begin a trail or deal with a problem.

Other coordinators elect to speak to groups and give presentations to those interested in learning about bluebirds. They might also assist folks in building or obtaining nest boxes. BRAW has a Trail Builder program that supplies 2 to 5 free nest boxes for new members. County coordinators can offer these new members advice about siting, erecting and monitoring nest boxes. They can also direct anyone looking for help to the staff and resources found at www.BRAW.org.

Once coordinators have chosen to assist others in their county with learning about the practices that will improve the monitoring of the nest boxes on trails, it is important to keep in touch with folks to learn about their



successes and offer solutions to the problems that arise.

My Personal Experience

As the Oconto County Coordinator since 2010, I have had many rewarding experiences meeting new people interested in starting bluebird trails.

It all began with the 12 nest boxes that Dr. Kent Hall helped me install at the Patriot Golf Club in Abrams, Wisconsin. Now, the trail has grown to 18 boxes under a new owner, Dennis Kaminski.

Likewise, I've enjoyed working with groups like the Bird City group in Oconto, currently led by Cordula Van Den Heuvel. This group has initiated bluebird trails now consisting of 75 nest boxes being monitored by 10 bluebird enthusiasts. She and I have given bluebird presentations, including for 130 interested folks last year in Shawano County.

Along the way, I've also had a chance to do research on skylight boxes to discourage house sparrows. Hopefully, this effort will help others who have had trouble with this pest.

If YOU are one of those who want to be involved in these efforts in your county, please contact me: Gene Birr, County Coordinator Chair at gbbird22@gmail.com or 920-826-7552, at 722 E. Frontage Rd., Little Suamico, WI 54141-8634.



Adopting a Trail

By Barbie Allen

Several years ago while helping me put in a trail at Northbrook Golf Course in Luxemburg in Kewaunee county, Steve Mayer (Brown County Coordinator) and Gene Birr (Oconto County Coordinator) spotted many nest boxes attached to a fence line on Highway 54 near Lake Largo in Green Bay, Wisconsin. They asked if it was part of one of my trails. I said "no" but it made me question: Is anyone monitoring them?

We all know that an unmonitored trail is worse than no trail at all. I found this trail to be a house sparrow haven. I immediately started monitoring it on a weekly basis. The houses were not in great shape and spanned about two miles along the highway and a walking trail.

I had no way to trap sparrows in these houses but I knew I could prevent adding to the existing house sparrow population. That year I did not allow any house sparrows to fledge in these boxes. The house sparrows did kill a black-capped chickadee batch of chicks but several tree swallows eventually filled a couple of the nest boxes. I worked hard to replace the deteriorated boxes.

I can only stress how important even adopting a "hopeless" trail is. I will never make the high bluebird per box ratio that is the goal of most monitors but maybe reducing house sparrow numbers should also be a monitor's goal. The following year, I put up new houses that were no longer on the fence and were better spaced. These were all equipped with Van Ert traps.

The second year, I had less house sparrow problems and fledged two nests of black-capped chickadees; more tree swallows and happily one pair of bluebirds had a second batch fledge.

I was fortunate and attended our annual convention and found out about the deluxe repeating sparrow trap. Talking with many successful "house sparrow trappers". I purchased one and am happy to say that since using this, my house sparrow population has been greatly reduced. Anyone serious about house sparrow trapping should invest in this trap.

BRAW Welcomes These Members

BRAW welcomes these new and returning members. For the Blues!

Jonathon Knopp, Milwaukee
Sue Sample, Madison
Ken Beyer, Mt. Horeb
Rob & Cindy Senner, Oconto Falls
Patriot Golf Club, Abrams
Heidi Kelly, Tomah
Jeffrey Freye, Sheboygan
Wehr Nature Center, Franklin
Christopher Glass, Racine
Chris Karnish, Port Washington
Laine Hevey, Madison
Steve Kemps, Almond
Mike Karlewicz, Franklin
Vicki Depies, Random Lake
John Kessler, Madison
Dale & Lila Mathwich, Madison

Barb Stanek, Oshkosh
Jim Mueller, Oshkosh
David Harrison, Franklin
M. David Thornton, Brookfield
Owen Perry, Mequon
Cara Mesman, Dodgeville
Maddie Lopresti, Shorewood
Josh Brown, Eau Claire
Mary Witte, Milwaukee
Jan Dyke, Milwaukee
Brenda Gruett, Neenah
Scott & Sue Mathwich, Columbus
Bruce & Mary Ann Mathwich, Rockton, IL
John & Carol Szymanski, Marshfield
Mark & Rosemarie Weber, Marshfield
Leon Keding, Marshfield
Rob & JoAnn Roehl, Marshfield
Kimberly Long, Ashland
Jim & Lori Livingston, Medford
Henry Koshollek, Stoughton

Jeff Rusinow, Grafton
Jessica Miller, Eau Claire
Joseph Dalsing, Allouez
Patricia Lima, Mequon
John Clendining, Piles Grove, NJ

Donations Fall 2020

Ann Vandenberg, \$15
John Clemetsen, \$30 nest boxes
Robert Holtz, \$50
Harry Peterson, \$15 nest box
Dan Behnke, \$100
Pat & Steve Cox, \$15 nest box
Megan & Kenneth Karth, \$25
Michael Murray, \$100
Memuna Khan, \$15 nest box
Patriot Golf Club, \$25
Jeff Rusinow, \$1200
Timothy Pier, Crivitz, \$30.
In Memory of Judy Washatko, \$80
By Ron and Elaine Hull, Portage

Bluebirds Find A Novel Home

By Kris Pfeiffer

Our home in the Village of Merton, Wisconsin – in northern Waukesha County, which is just west of Milwaukee – became the accidental home to a family of bluebirds. The subdivision requires the installation of a specific mailbox, which includes an opening for newspapers.

I noticed each time I'd open our front door – which is perhaps 100 feet away from the mailbox – that a bird would quickly exit the mailbox. It seemed to have some supernatural power in that the bird could sense somebody approaching from the back side of the mailbox, which is opposite from the opening.

One day I decided to sit on my porch with a pair of binoculars to determine what type of bird I had, and indeed, I saw a bluebird sitting on the mailbox. We did try to look into the box, but all we could see was the nest. If there was anything in the nest, it was well-hidden to us.

I had just purchased a small HD battery-operated camera to use in a remote-control airplane I was building at the time. I simply stuck it on the top of the opening of the mailbox to see what was happening in there closeup. After an hour or so, I collected the



camera, removed the SD card, inserted it into my computer, and found that I had captured a great video of a bluebird feeding and taking care of its young.

My friends on YouTube thought it was pretty cool, especially my parents, who, after years of not being able to attract a bluebird into their nest box, were a bit jealous that I did it accidentally.

If you would like to view the video, just go to www.braw.org or check it out on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7BENeu0Yi4>.

Photos by Kris Pfeiffer



Bluebirds or Tree Swallows?

By Roger T. Williams

When launching a new venture, it's good to have a passionate guide along for the ride. Our friend, Gene Kroupa, knew we had a farm in Iowa County and suggested we install bluebird boxes on our property. He even provided two boxes and advice on where to place them: in a line just east of our pasture.

I installed them in late March, then checked the boxes while at the farm turkey hunting in late April. The first box had what looked like the perfect bluebird nest but the second was filled to the brim with grass and feathers.

On my next visit to whack wild parsnip, I was excited to see a bluebird hen and a couple of chicks in the first nest. Gene advised me the second nest probably had had tree swallows nesting in it, but it remained empty so I cleaned it out hoping for another nest of bluebirds.

By my next trip, the bluebirds had "flown the coop" so I cleaned out the first box. Additional nests were built in each box but neither one produced bluebird fledglings.

Thanks to the bluebirds and tree swallows for offering us another way of connecting with nature!



Top: Williams placed his nest boxes out in the open to attract bluebirds.

Right: Roger Williams cleaned out an empty tree swallow nest in hopes of attracting a bluebird pair.



Photos by Kristi Williams.

Nest Box Deal for New BRAW Members

Fall is the perfect time to put up new bluebird nest boxes. Do you know someone who owns or has access to property suitable for bluebird nest boxes? It could be a farm, recreational ground, lakeside lawn or big backyard.

Anyone who joins the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin this fall as a new member at the \$25 annual level, will get FREE:

- 2 to 5 new nest boxes with predator guards,
- An instructional booklet on how to locate and put up boxes,
- A four-issue subscription to the *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter,



- Advice from an experienced bluebird trailer as needed, and
- Access to the "members only" section of the www.braw.org website.

Delivery Options

The nest boxes can be picked up directly on the north side of Madison by new members. Or BRAW can ship the nest boxes at no cost to the new member.



Cedar nest boxes with coon guards ready to be shipped to new members.

Conditions

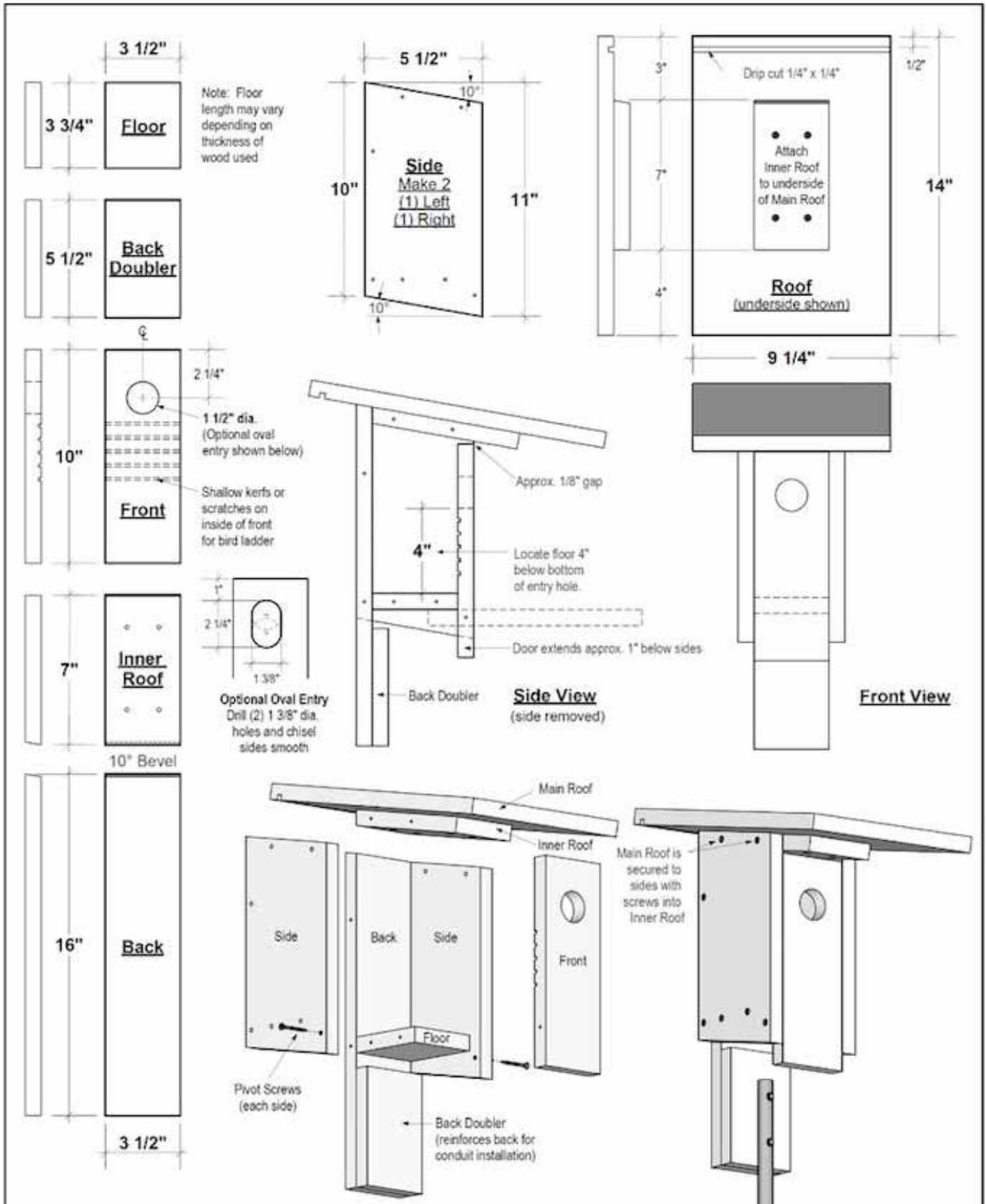
The new member getting this deal would have to agree to monitor the nest boxes and fill out the data reporting form at the end of the 2021 season. Reporting data is easy and critical to success of the Trail Builder Program.

Payment

Payment can be made directly via the www.braw.org website. A printable membership form is also available for folks who want to send a check in to BRAW, PO Box 628492, Middleton, WI 53562.

Questions

If you have any questions, contact Val Van Winkle, Membership Coordinator, ripvws@gmail.com or phone 847-302-5684.



Quan	Material / Size	Component
44"	1 x 4 (3/4" x 3 1/2")	Front, Back, Floor, Inner Roof, Back Doubler
23"	1 x 6 (3/4" x 5 1/2")	Sides
14"	1 x 10 (3/4" x 9 1/4")	Roof

The Simple Nestbox
 Official nestbox of the Lafayette County Bluebird Society, Wisconsin
 designed by: Joe O'Halloran

Drawn by: Fred Stille, Sr. Version 1.1, August 1, 2013 Page 1 of 1
 plan by Nestboxbuilder.com Copyright © 2013 All rights reserved

Membership Renewal Information

By Valerie Van Winkle, Membership Services

It may be time to renew your annual membership to the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW), so that we can update our mailing list with the least cost and effort.

Look at the address label on your newsletter. The number group following your name indicates the month and year of expiration. If your label reads Fall 2020 your membership will expire with this issue.

You will also be able to renew or join as an Online Paperless member and get the newsletter by email. We will send you the issue electronically. This will save us postage, reduce printing cost and conserve paper. You can print it if you desire.

Fill out the membership renewal form and send it with your check or money order to **BRAW Membership, c/o Valerie Van Winkle, PO Box 628492, Middleton, WI 53562**. After September 1, your membership will begin with the next issue when payment is received. **We no longer mail out back issues and back date memberships.**

The basic \$25 Individual/Family membership covers the cost of printing and mailing the quarterly *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter.

The next issue of the *Wisconsin Bluebird* goes into production in November and will be mailed to arrive the first week in December. Memberships received after November 1 may not be processed in time to receive the Winter newsletter. Consider a one-time \$300 Life Membership in BRAW. **Life members do not have to renew.**

Consider the Special \$10 Gift Membership (Online only).

All Renewals/New Memberships received by November 1 will begin with the Winter issue.

New members can use the following form to join BRAW.

Please complete the membership renewal form provided here and return it to BRAW as soon as possible. **Now you can renew your membership at www.braw.org and use PayPal or a credit card and you don't need to mail anything in.**

Wisconsin Bluebird Subscription and BRAW, Inc. Membership

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

- 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 renewal.
- This is a new membership/subscription.
- This is a GIFT membership/subscription.

Enclosed please find my check \$ _____

Mail this membership/subscription request to:

BRAW Membership
Valerie Van Winkle
PO Box 628492
Middleton, WI 53562

Please note: This form appears in this newsletter as a convenience for all who wish to obtain membership. Memberships expire as noted on your mailing label and should be renewed immediately to ensure continued access to newsletters.

If you renew or join during the year you will be on a quarterly membership basis and will not receive back issues of *Wisconsin Bluebird*.

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

BRAW ELECTED & APPOINTED OFFICERS

President Patrick Ready, 815 Sky Ridge DR., Madison, WI 53719 • 608/239-0791 • birdsready@gmail.com (term to 12/22)

Vice 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)

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Mounting a Noel Coon Guard

A few new members wondered how the Coon Guard was used on a bluebird box? I figured a photo would be the easiest way to show how one is mounted to the front of the box. Several screws and washers on each side are enough to secure it in place. Any cat or raccoon would get poked by the wires at the end of the guard.



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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.

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**Send in Your 2020 Data
by Sept. 30**
See page 2

Check the address label. If it says "Fall 2020", then you need to RENEW membership now.

Nest Q & A's

By Gene Kroupa, Director

At the end of the trailing season some nests leave me puzzling over what they mean. Sometimes I have a pretty good idea, but there are those for which I have absolutely no clue.

Sticks Atop Fine Grass Nest – This one is pretty easy to figure out. A male wren wrangled the nest box for one of his attempts to attract a female. These little busy bodies are a nuisance because one male can plug up more than one box. If the nest box is filled to the top with a trashy nest with all kinds debris, I know that a House Sparrow is the villain. Clearly it is time to move this box away from any trees, brush, homes, barns and feedlots.

Nests with Ants – More than likely eggs hatched and the residue attracted these nuisance insects. Chances are fair that the chicks survived through fledging. A good cleaning and spraying with Permethrin solution are in order. Farm & Fleet, ACE Hardware and Fleet Farm stores usually carry it in stock.

Abandoned Nests – These are finished nests in fine condition that appear not to have been used. My theory is that they were built early and something happened. Perhaps the pair was driven off or otherwise decided to find a better nest location. One of the bluebird pair might have died. This situation leaves me befuddled with no good answer.

Destroyed Nests – When I see nest material strung out from the entrance I expect trouble. More times than not a raccoon or some other predator has sought the eggs or chicks. This is a reminder to me to make sure all nest boxes have predator guards so this waste is prevented.

Co-opted Nests – The presence of feathers and speckled white eggs tells me that tree swallows have taken over the nest. While I would prefer bluebirds using the nest box, I am happy to see any cavity nester take up residence. Occasionally, bluebirds will return the favor.

Darkened Grass – Nests made of darkened, almost rotted – looking grass are a mystery. They are perfectly constructed but sometimes not in use. Were they woven of wet materials that started decomposing? Were they made of green grass that turned color in cooler air? I have no idea.

These nest issues highlight the importance of regular nest box monitoring. Maybe you have had similar experiences with questions of your own. If you have any answers or theories, please share them with me at: gkroupa@tds.net.



Tree swallow nests are easy to identify by feathers lining the nest.



Sometimes bluebirds reverse roles and build nests atop wren stick piles.



The stick-pile nest of a wren means it's probably time to find a better location for the box.

(Gene Kroupa photos.)