

Summer 2016
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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

30 Years of Bluebird Restoration

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A Word from the Prez

Here we are at the start of another nesting season. The bluebirds seemed to arrive right on schedule here in Dane County. I saw pairs by mid-March on some of my trails. The severe cold and snow had pretty much ended by then and Winter was letting Spring take hold. I was thinking it would be an early start for the Blues to get nesting. Boy was I wrong!

There were a few reports of nest building and then the bluebirds took off - no apparent reason, at least not on my trails. I didn't even have nest building until late April. Perhaps there just wasn't enough insect activity meaning their food supply was scarce and therefore they wouldn't nest? Who knows?

In late April a week of cold air settled over the entire state. High temps were 20 degrees below the norm. I received word from Kent Hall that he was seeing big losses up in central Wisconsin. His bluebirds were well ahead of mine so he had a freeze out. Maybe I was fortunate the Blues here didn't get started?

Now it's early May and things have picked up finally. But still not as good as I had hoped. After moving to the west side of Madison last year I took it upon myself to redo the trails the late Gary Gaard had set up. Badger Prairie Park near Verona was one of them. When I checked his boxes in late August they contained almost all House Sparrow nests. I found only one bluebird nest from the 15 boxes there. I knew I had my work cut out for me. There seems to be an endless supply of House Sparrows - only 1 successful bluebird nest with 4 eggs so far. There appear to be other pairs but no nesting. I think they are being harassed by the House Sparrows. A major trapping and removal is in order for this trail.

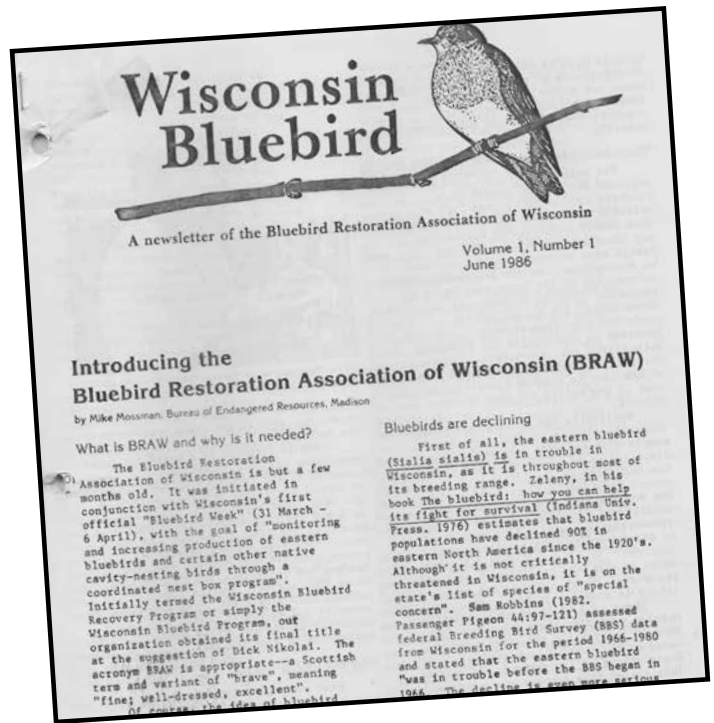
Over winter I stumbled upon another county park where Gary had some of his boxes. This was at Brigham County park near Blue Mounds in western Dane Co. His boxes were in really bad shape and I had to replace all but one. There isn't a lot of space for a trail so I only have 6 boxes up. I went to monitor in April and found nothing. All boxes were empty and no sign of bluebirds. Then in early May I checked and was surprised to find 4 of the 6 boxes had bluebirds nesting! Two boxes had 5 eggs, 1 had 1 egg and 1 just had a new nest.

So there is hope afterall! I was getting pretty depressed after such a slow start. As Ann Wick of Black Earth once told me regarding bluebirds "Expect the unexpected." I guess so!!

On a final note, it was good to see so many enthusiastic members at the annual convention at Mosquito Hill back in early April. The Silent Auction was a big success. Thanks to all for their donations and to those who bought them. A win-win all around.

Happy Trails!

Patrick Ready



BRAW is 30!!

The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc. (BRAW) is a nonprofit organization incorporated under the Laws of the State of Wisconsin. The **purpose and mission** of BRAW is to increase the production of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity-nesting song birds through a coordinated, statewide nest box construction and monitoring program. BRAW seeks to expand public knowledge and enthusiasm for the Eastern Bluebird so that a growing number of people will have the desire to aid cavity nesters and have the knowledge about how to best accomplish this in their own communities.

BRAW coordinates its cavity-nesting recovery program through a network of volunteer **County Coordinators**, workshops, meetings, and its official **Wisconsin Bluebird** newsletter.

When BRAW was organized in 1986, it was estimated that the Eastern Bluebird population *in its historic range* had declined by 90 percent during the preceding 50 years due to changes in agriculture practices, competition from the House (English) Sparrow and European Starling, severe weather in its central and southern winter ranges, and the loss of nest sites, such as tree cavities and hollow wooden fence posts.

A few far-sighted individuals and local organizations that took note of the plight of bluebirds in their respective communities had helped bluebirds and other cavity nesters during those bleak years. Much experimentation was done to develop nest boxes. Some of those efforts were more successful than others. Bluebird "trails" consisting of a few or many bluebird nest boxes were established by some persons. Special care of nest boxes (monitoring) was begun by more knowledgeable bluebirders. A few individuals kept records by documenting bluebird nesting success and events on their trails.

BRAW works to bring to light the efforts of Wisconsin citizens who had been helping bluebirds in the past and those who have recently joined their ranks. Since 1996, BRAW has entered monitors' data into a computer database and as a result, through computer analysis of the data, we are gain-

ing better insights; and nest box designs affect bluebird population dynamics.

Through workshops, the Annual State Convention, and publication of research findings in the **Wisconsin Bluebird** newsletter, BRAW shares successful production techniques while hopefully avoiding some of the mistakes painfully learned by earlier bluebird enthusiasts.

County Coordinators are the "grassroots" of Wisconsin's eastern bluebird restoration program. County Coordinators often conduct local workshops each year that are usually held in late winter and early spring. BRAW's County Coordinators distribute literature, are sources for nest box construction plans, answer questions, and otherwise serve as knowledgeable persons to help individuals, clubs, and organizations effectively aid bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds. The County Coordinators assist interested persons in becoming members of BRAW.

BRAW members provide the financial base for the publication of the quarterly newsletter, **Wisconsin Bluebird**. The newsletter reports monitors' data and data interpretations, different experiences of readers and other persons who work with cavity nesters, how to recognize good habitat, why and how to monitor a bluebird trail, how to spot natural enemies of bluebirds, how to defend bluebirds against their enemies, how to identify nest failures and what to do about them, about the impact and significance of other bird species that may nest in bluebird nest boxes, the names and addresses of County Coordinators and BRAW, Inc. officers and directors.

BRAW, Inc. maintains liaisons with the Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Endangered Resources, the UW-Stevens Point, the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

In the last issue I asked members to send in their comments on their trails or what were they doing 30 years ago when BRAW was formed. Here are some responses.

Dear BRAW!

What was I doing 30 years ago? One of my bluebird trails approx 6 hours every weekend!

When I joined a 4-H Club at 10 years old, one of my leaders got me interested in birds. Helped me build a few houses to put up on the farm I grew up on. I started putting up feeders in winter too. Am still doing it. Best bird feeding memory was seeing 7 male cardinals in snow covered crab tree waiting their turn feeding.

On the farm, getting the cows for milking, I'd walk down this long lane & see 2 or 3 Meadowlarks, 2 or 3 Bob-o-links, or a few Red-winged Blackbirds. Now days you might see a few Red-winged Blackbirds. Now techniques in farming, pesticides, fewer hollow trees have hurt some bird species including Bluebirds!

At between 25-30 years old, I put up a few houses on my 6 acre property. Got a bluebird pair to nest. It worked, gort enthused. Next year I made 10 more houses to put on a neighbor's farm, got a bluebird. It worked, made 10 more houses! Until my very good friend & I were spending approx 6 hours every weekend checking out my 3 bluebird trails. Ended up with 103 houses. In the last years we averaged 65-70 bluebirds & 300 tree swallows fledged. Bad average? Tree Swallows are good birds too!

BRAW came out with more & more good information over the years. Could have doen better with early informa-

tion. A bad back, can't walk far, had to give up my trails 8 years ago. Nothing like looking into a house & seeing those beautiful baby Blues.

Happy Trails to BRAW & fellow Bluebirders
Donald Schomberg
Sheboygan Falls, WI

Bluebird Orphans – A tradgedy with a Happy Ending

The UW Madison Arboretum Bluebird Trail located in the 50-acre Longenecker Horticultural Gardens has a 28 year history of success and tradgedy.

The following story has a tragic begining but a heart-warming ending. A pair of Bluebirds fledged 6 young on June 2, 2007. I checked the box June 9 and found a new nest. By June 14 a second clutch of 5 eggs had been laid. Five chicks hatched around June 27th. On July 7 I opened the box and discovered a horrible sight! A pair of adult bluebirds had been murdered a few days earlier. Their heads were facing away form the entrance and their wings spread over the babies. (Trying to protect them?) The back half of their bodies had been eaten. Flies and maggots were abundant and I was certain the chicks were dead. After my tears dried, I removed the dead adults and to my surprise 4 young were barely alive. One was missing. (Perhaps the following is a clue. I found a sparrow or was it a cowbird egg beneath the box?) I made a nest of fine grasses and transferred the chicks into it. Then quickly removed the old, wet, smelly nest and replaced it with the clean nest and surviving young. I sat under a nearby tree and thought about the future of the little orphans. Perhaps an hour or more passed while I pondered what to do. I heard a bluebird call. When I looked up I observed a female siititng on top of the box. She left, returned and sat on the box again. A third tiime she returned and landed on the entrance hole holding a worm in her bill. Imagine my joy when she entered the box! More time passed. A male joined her snf they continued to feed the starving chicks. By July 22 the adopted orphans fledged. Miracles do happen.

The tragic death of the adults and one chick will remain an enigma forever. I am grateful for the happy ending.

Sylvia Marek
Madison

BRAW 30th Annual Meeting Kicked Off the 2016 Season

Here are the minutes from the Annual Meeting held in April.

By Patricia Heiden

The 30th annual meeting of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin was held at the Mosquito Hill Nature Center near New London, Wisconsin, on April 9, 2016. A total of 78 bluebird enthusiasts and various wildlife specialists were in attendance on a cold, snowy, early Spring day.



President Patrick Ready welcomed all of us to the convention and opened the meeting at 9:05 A.M. In response to Patrick's inquiry, all in attendance seemed to agree they like the new, simpler and shorter form, BRAW EZ Summary Form, for reporting our nesting results at the end of the year. Patrick also informed us that we are in need of more Directors for our organization and anyone interested in becoming a Board member should talk to him. All our welcome.

Mike Helgren, BRAW Treasurer, then presented a report for the period from January 1, 2016, through March 31, 2016. We had total assets of \$37,743.69 as of January 1, 2016. Total income for the first three months received was \$8,165.38, expenses were \$4,650.51. Total assets as of March 31, 2016, were \$40,9118.54. BRAW is in very good financial shape and Mike explained that if anyone wishes to start a bluebird trail or refurbish one and would like funds to help with that project, they



should contact him. We have funds available for this purpose.

Steve Sample, BRAW Vice President and coordinator of data collection, then talked to us about the web program and changes that are being made. We are going to be able to use Pay Pal in the future. We will also be eliminating the requirement of all membership renewals being in January, and that renewals will now be on the anniversary of when a member first joins BRAW. Steve also presented us with some results from the 2015 nesting season. The total bluebirds fledged was 31,170. Total bluebirds hatched was 32,729. Steve emphasized why we should all turn our data in and that from now on it should be turned into the data coordinator, rather than to a county coordinator. We're doing a great job in helping the bluebirds to recover. It's something to think back when BRAW was first organized and there were so few bluebirds and some of us never even saw a bluebird, and now we get to see and hear them all the time. It's a wonderful thing.



Bob Tamm from southeastern Wisconsin then talked to us about the history and future of bluebirds. He talked about proper habitat for bluebirds and pairing boxes, along with good monitoring. Also, it is important to start children at a young age and get them interested in bluebirds and birding. We also talked about predators, such as House Sparrows, cats and raccoons. We also need to take the time to observe our bluebirds in action and watch what they're doing. Ensure a bluebird future, educate our young, and not so young. Lastly, a good monitor should always enjoy the experience. Only put up enough boxes that you can enjoy the experience.





Bluebird of the Year - Daryl Eberhart



Lifetime Achievement - Terry Glanzman



Educator - Lora Schreiber

After a brief break we proceeded to the sixth annual BRAW awards ceremony.

Patrick Ready presented the **Bluebird of the Year Award** to **Daryl Eberhart** of Jackson County. Like many of us, Daryl started out with a few boxes and then it just took off from there. Daryl now has 160 boxes that he monitors and he has been monitoring for seven years.

The next award, the **Joe O'Halloran**



Merit Award - Ellen Lafouge

Lifetime Achievement Award, was then presented to **Terry Glanzman**, He has been monitoring bluebird trails since 1965 in four counties. He will be monitoring 437 boxes this year. He has had tremendous success with bluebirds and spends a lot of time monitoring his trails.

The Educator of the Year Award was then presented by President Ready to **Lora Schreiber**. She is a former teacher at the Farmington Elementary School who started with 15 nestboxes and over the years has submitted pictures to BRAW of her fourth grade class monitoring their bluebird boxes. Even though she is now retired from



teaching, she still works with the children and continues trail monitoring.

The BRAW Merit Award was presented to **Ellen Lafouge**, BRAW website coordinator, of Bayside, Wisconsin. She couldn't be with us today, but is being recognized for the wonderful work she has done for BRAW in setting up our website and in keeping it up-to-date, answering questions, monitoring the web, etc. Her husband, Jean Pierre Lafouge, will be taking over the web duties in the future, but we are ever grateful to Ellen for her hard work over the years.

Our next speakers were William Mueller and Mile Reese who talked to us about the second Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas that is now being worked on. The first Breeding Bird Atlas was done in the 1990's. The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, the Western Great Lakes Bird & Bat Observatory, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative are responsible for the second atlas. Atlas work for this second atlas is now underway and started last year. Six years of field work went into the first atlas, five years is planned for this second atlas. It's been 15 years since the first atlas was completed. All data is now going into ebird, which is totally different from the last atlas when it was all done by paper. A huge fundraising operation is going on at the present time for Atlas 2. BRAW has contributed funds to the atlas work. The atlas is being done in order to determine which species of birds are expanding their range and which species are declining in numbers. About one-third of our species have declining populations, one-third are increasing, and one-third have stable populations, and in order to react to this and help with protection measures and to determine which species have expanded their breeding range, we need to gather information from all the counties in Wisconsin to compare with the first atlas that was done. Seven species of birds were found to be breeding in Wisconsin for the first time that we did not know were breeding here. When doing atlas work, you have to

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slow down and observe the birds to determine what they're doing. It's not counting birds, it's determining what they're doing, such as nest building, feeding young, mating, etc. If anyone is interested in doing atlas work, they are encouraged to talk to Bill or Mike after our meeting.

We then broke for lunch of sandwiches of turkey and cheese or ham and cheese, together with potato salad, macaroni salad, Cole slaw, and bars for dessert. Everybody enjoyed the food and the fellowship.

After lunch, the silent auction was closed and everyone got to pick up the items they bid on and won. There were lots of different things donated, such as books, pictures, meal worms, bird feeders, brownies (yum), a garden flag, and walking sticks,. Thank you to everyone who contributed items to the silent auction and to those who bid on the items.

We then had a brief presentation from Ripon College student Perry Poulas who talked to us about his research on aggression levels of bluebirds. It



was very interesting and he found that bluebirds in different areas of the country have different aggression levels. He studied House Sparrows competing with bluebirds on a 72 box trail at Ripon College. His studies also involved the use of recorded bluebird songs and how other bluebirds respond to these calls. He plans to continue his research in the future

Our final speaker of the day was Steve Betchkal, ornithologist, author, philosopher, and scientist. He talked to

us about the birds that have become extinct and how it happened. Many bird species are suffering dangerous population declines, many of which are human caused. We all know the story of the Passenger Pigeon. However, there are also several success stories of recovery, such as the Bald Eagle. Wisconsin is the third highest state for nesting eagles. The Peregrine Falcon is another success story, as well as the California Condor and Kirtland's Warbler. Steve ended by telling us that nine birds have gone extinct and asking us which one will be next?

Our next annual meeting is tentatively being planned for Dane County. Details will be forthcoming in our newsletter.

It was another great annual meeting, and President Ready adjourned the annual meeting at 2:40 P.M.

The 2017 BRAW Annual Convention will be in Dane Co. Date and location to be announced in the *Wisconsin Bluebird*.

New (and returning) Members Join BRAW

Membership includes a subscription to the *Wisconsin Bluebird* and a copy of the *BRAW Information Pack*. Two great bluebird educational materials for monitors from 1 nest box to 100+. Consider a gift sub to someone you think would enjoy bluebirds.



Lewis & Gina Quale – Janesville – Welcome Back!
Steven Johnson – Dodgeville
Barb Kornely – Fox Lake
Sue & Bob Eagle – Oregon
Randall Bliss – Janesville
Olivia Hill – Appleton
Gail Holmberg – Oak Park, IL
Evonne Kraemer – Spring Green
Janice Kumlien – Janesville – Welcome Back!
Dan & Lori Larsen – Waupun
Corinne Palmer – Bayside – Gift Sub from Ellen & JP Lafouge
Bob & Jean Peterson – Waupun
Bill Schrank – Big Bend – Gift Sub from Dan Savin
Daniel D Schroeder – Hortonville
Ted Urban – Duluth, MN
Robert Eichmann – Cedarberg
Richard Butusov – Spring Green
Marcia Getto – Madison
Marian Kontek – Sun Prairie
Christine Mason – Lake Geneva
Phyllis Glanzman – Mondovi
Marilynn Slezak – Neillsville
Susan Niebauer – Oregon
Nancy Paul – Green Bay
Shari & Mark Kastner – New Berlin – New LIFE members, Welcome Back!
Phyllis Feiner – Spring Green, Welcome Back!

County Coordinator News

By Carol McDaniel

Thank you to all of the CCs who sent reports to me for this issue. Anyone who has any CC news can mail it or email it to me. My contact info can be found on the CC list that is included in this issue. Please note that my mailing address has changed.

We are sorry that Charlotte and Roy Lukes have resigned as Door County CCs due to Roy's poor health. They have been dedicated to BRAW for many years and reported their trail to the yearly count. Hopefully, they continue to enjoy watching the bluebirds near their home.

I am happy to report that Brian Forest will be taking over the Door County CC position. His contact information can be found on the CC list in this issue. Thanks Brian.

Bob Tamm informed me that Rick Fare has been doing the programs in Kenosha and Racine County. Thanks to Rick for taking this on.

Our CCs have been busy as you will see from the reports that follow. Be sure and send the news in your county to me and let me know what you are doing to help promote BRAW and the bluebirds. Happy bluebirding, Carol McDaniel.

Pat Ready from Dane County: BRAW had a booth at the Garden Expo on Feb 12-14. Saturday was a GREAT day! Sold 41 nest boxes, all the oval hole guards, ran out of Info Packs and bags to put stuff in. I did my BB talk at 1:15 and they put me in a room with 100 chairs...filled before I started. Standing room only in the back of the room. Lots of comments and exchange of information. People love BBs!! I also did another talk on Sunday at 1 PM.

In June BRAW VP Steve Sample and I plan to do a Bluebird presentation and box building seminar with 4-H kids on the UW Madison campus.

Dave Misterek from Winnebago County: I received a request to give a bluebird talk at Ledgeview Nature Center in Calumet Co. Since there is no CC for that county, I will give the

talk. I gave a bluebird presentation at Heckrodt Nature Center in Menasha two weeks ago (April) and last Fri I helped Mike and Ellen Helgren at the Madison Garden Expo. Both events were very successful.

Dale Moody from Iowa County: Iowa CO. trail checked 4/26. 130 + eggs and 3 nests hatched or hatching w/12 young. I also have a trail in LaFayette CO. On 4/25, it had 4 of 10 houses with 20 eggs. Hope the parents have "warm" feathers to comfort through this cold spell!!! We are doing our BB walkabout at Muscoda May 20 like last year with Driftless Area Land Conservancy and Wisconsin Natural Resources Foundation.

Memuna Khan from Fond du Lac: I gave a bluebird trail orientation to Mrs. Pokorny's third class at Murray Park Elementary School in Ripon, Wisconsin on April 6. Last year her class installed three boxes around the school and one box successfully fledged bluebirds. Each week, students monitor the boxes and submit their observations to me using Google Forms. This year, they will also take a field trip in May to observe me banding nestling bluebirds. On April 7th, I participated in a fundraising event for the Ripon Education Foundation. I was a host of a table with guests who wanted to talk about bluebirds. On Saturday, April 30th, I will be speaking about the Ripon College Bluebird Trail and BRAW at the Green Lake Bird Festival.

Mary Holleback from Washington County: I taught 4 home school classes - Bluebird Basics and then monitored Riveredge's bluebird trail with them. We only found two BB nests - it's a little early yet (April) for the other species since it's been so cold. Bluebirds have arrived here too. We did a Housing for Wildlife program here in conjunction with the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog on March 5th. About a dozen people attended.

Rita Gundry from Eau Claire County: I saw our first bluebirds of the season on March 10th. Spring pretended it was coming early in March, then a cold blast in April shut the bluebirds

down in this neck of the woods. They are slowly doing what nature intended. Hoping for 2 nesting periods here near Eau Claire for the 2016 season.

Bob Tamm from Waukesha and Milwaukee Counties: Since my presentation at the BRAW meeting at Mosquito Hill Nature Preserve, all I officially have left is the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center engagement, where I will be giving a similar but tweaked presentation on Saturday May 7th. Other than that, I have been doing the usual Spring box building and helping people with trail problems, which as you know are quite common when the bluebird season arrives... which it HAS despite this (crappy) cold weather!!!

Rod Courtier from Rock County: It seems like the Bluebirds in my area are slow at getting started nesting, and not many around. On March 14 while getting the trail ready, I only saw 3 Bluebirds. One of them was sitting on top of a house trying to look into the house, but was so puzzled because the door was open. The Evansville, WI. Energy Fair on April 22 was a very successful and fun filled evening. I sold two PVC houses to birders that were having trouble with Sparrows, and a NABS house to another. A young birder about 10 to 12 won the drawing for the NABS house, he was very excited. His parents were going to help him get it put up. His dad told me that his son liked to build houses and put them up. I found out people really like to talk about their birds. Some had questions about problems they had and I tried to help them find answers. I talked to Izaiah Janisch who is a Eagle Scout. He also has earned The Hornaday Award which is a wild-life protection medal which very few Scouts earn. It requires 5 merit badges and then and carry out a significant project in Natural Resources Conservation. His project was to set up a battery recycling program for the city. One of his other projects was setting up a 14 house Bluebird trail at the high school. He did not know about sending his nesting results to BRAW. He took a EZ form and said he will send it in the Fall.

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Steve Mayer from Outagamie and Brown Counties (Gene Birr and Steve share Brown County): On Friday, April 15 Gene Birr and I helped site a 20 box trail on Northbrook (Near Luxemburg, WI) Country Club for Barb Allen and her husband Tom. Also on Wednesday, April 13 we added the Noel guards on two of my trails. These are established trails so should be interesting to see if we can keep the Racoons at bay...? Tree Swallows are back and to date I know of 16 less Sparrows that are bothering my boxes.... so the war begins... Happy trails.

Jim Beix from Pierce County: Lowell Peterson, St. Croix CC, and I gave a BRAW presentation last night (March 16) at the Plum City Public Library. 5 adults and about 9 youngsters attended. A woman attending may want us to address her Master Gardeners group.

Diane Chambers from Sawyer County: I haven't seen any bluebirds here yet (end of April), but we got 8" of snow this week. I have seen them as far as Eau Claire county, but none here in Sawyer yet.

Larry Liegel from Sauk County: I have 63 egg count on my trail in Sauk County, so after a slow start, the birdies are picking up the pace. I have one batch with hatchlings as of April 29, which is the earliest date ever for me. We have added a new member from Plain in Franklin Township, Evonne Kraemer, who has started with about 15 boxes.

Carol McDaniel from Lafayette County: It is the first of May and the Bluebird Trail monitors in Lafayette County are commenting that the blue-

birds are off to a slow start this year, but things are picking up now. The Lafayette county bluebird trail monitors are sending their weekly reports to me and I compile them and email the results to over 120 emails. I receive a lot of positive feedback. Sue Cashman has been promoting bluebirds in the county by having regular bluebird trail hikes with youth along the Pecatonica River Walk Trail in Darlington. She also has been teaching bird classes at the elementary school. Sue is the manager of the Bluebird Nest Nature Center in Darlington.

Kent Hall from Portage County: We have added several monitors this season. They are: 1) Barb Bartelt—23 nest box route at the Mound View Golf Course in Friendship 2) Bruce & Jerri Brewer plus Warren & Janet Evans—30 nest box route at Ft. McCoy 3) Mary Dahm & Sharon Schwab—33 nest box route south of Kellner 4) Melissa Guthmiller and Nicole Reyna—20 nest box route at Ft. McCoy 5) Georgina Demling—22 nest box route with Bengt-Ove Hellgren at the Glacier Wood Golf Club in Iola and 6) Sandy Schultz—10 nest box route with Ginny Rieves at Hartman Creek State Park in Waupaca Co.

The weather last week froze nesting in both TS's and EB's. I expect to remove 100-200 abandoned nests from our boxes this week. Without TS's and EB's protecting boxes, BC's have gone nuts. We now have 158 boxes occupied by them and that number should easily go over 200.

Here is a list of County Coordinators listed by county. Feel free to contact them if you have questions or need help with Bluebirds.

ADAMS
No appointee

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The 2015 season for the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society Bluebird Trail

By Kent D. Hall, Ph.D., Coordinator

The Aldo Leopold Audubon Society has completed its 14th season with its bluebird trail (= Audubon Bluebird Trail = ABT).

2015 was the 2nd most productive in our history (Table 1) for bluebirds (6,453), and highest for total songbirds (8,717), Tree Swallows (1,659) & chickadees (368). Our bluebird fledgling production was about 21% of the 30,900 reported for the entire state in the Winter Issue of the Wisconsin Bluebird.

In the 14 years that the ABT has been in operation, we have produced about 68,102 songbirds including 52,010 bluebirds, 12,006 Tree Swallows, 2,107 wrens and 1,969 chickadees (Table 1).

The key to our success this summer was the “near-perfect” weather throughout the summer. The temperatures were generally moderate and rainfall was mostly well-spaced and consistent without major flooding or droughts—ideal for songbirds in general. Of particular importance was the lack of black flies at Ft. McCoy, our most productive area for bluebirds. They can be devastating to cavity nesting songbirds in years when conditions are ideal for their hatches.

Table 2 shows the production of our 41 routes on the ABT. We had 74 monitors with a total of 348 seasons of experience. Monitors check their boxes once per week (usually Friday, Saturday or Sunday) and send their data to me.

I summarize the data weekly and send it back to the monitors. Experience tells me that this answers most questions from monitors and also maintains morale. In addition, I send personal emails to all monitors each week and that serves to maintain contact with our monitors and answer questions that they might have.

Our average number of bluebirds fledged per box was 4.52, highest in three years. Our mortality rate of 23.6% was one

Table 1. Songbird Production for 2002-2015 on the Audubon Bluebird Trail (Now, 68,102 Total)

Species/ Years	EABL	TRES	HOWR	BCCH	Grand Totals
2002	188	146	0	0	334
2003	339	223	17	50	629
2004	719	234	29	0	982
2005	1,732	544	42	63	2,381
2006	2,568	410	26	41	3,045
2007	3,967	800	123	99	4,989
2008	4,324	1,011	281	94	5,710
2009	5,290	1,013	235	99	6,637
2010	5,663	1,046	295	130	7,134
2011	4,836	990	241	184	6,251
2012	6,758	1,144	83	331	8,316
2013	4,230	1,253	288	167	5,938
2014	4,953	1,533	210	343	7,039
2015	6,453	1,659	237	368	8,717
TOTALS	52,010	12,006	2,107	1,969	68,102

Table 2. Route Statistics for Bluebirds on Audubon Trail: 2015

NAME	Boxes/ Yrs. Of Monitoring	EB Fledgling Per Nest Box	Mortality Of Eggs & Chicks	Songbirds Fledged/ Nest Box	Boxes Occupied	Double Nests/% Of Nest Boxes	Triple Nests % of Nest Boxes
Kate Anderson & Janice Rath	---35--- 2	2.63 (-0.34)	---20.7%--- 14.7E/6.0C	3.34	24 (70.6%)	7 (20.0%)	0
David & Patti Becker	---34--- 10	4.65 (+0.89)	---19.3%--- 13.7E/5.6C	6.82 #7	21 (61.8%)	19 (55.9%)	0
Robert & Deb Benada	---16--- 5	1.25 (-0.75)	---56.6%--- 43.4E/13.2C	2.81	8 (42.1%)	3 (18.8%)	0
Mary Bratz & Dick Stephens	---31--- 4	3.74 (-1.96)	---34.5%--- 26.0E/8.5C	6.19	24 (71.4%)	13 (41.9%)	0
Fred & Joyce Camacho	---35--- 2	3.20 (+0.34)	---28.1%--- 24.3E/3.8C	5.43	24 (71.5%)	9 (25.7%)	0
Samantha & Wendy Carlson	---33--- 2	5.67-#6 (+2.76)	---25.5%--- 22.2E/3.3C	6.39	20 (81.8%)	18 (54.5%)	1/33 = 3%
Jeff & Abby Duebler; William Sowers	---40--- 6	6.88-#3 (+2.62)	---23.6%--- 22.4E/1.2C	7.13 #4	40 (100%)	32 (80.0%)	0
Dave and Cathy Elgan	---23--- 1	2.96 NEW	---23.1%--- 18.4E/4.7C	4.78	15 (65.2%)	6 (26.6%)	0
Elijah & Stacy Grajkowski	---10--- 2	2.0 (-0.67)	---20.0%--- 20.0E/0.0C	4.10	8 (80%)	0 (0.0%)	0
Tom & Lynn Grimes	---37--- 6	4.73 (+1.62)	---18.6%--- 17.2E/1.4C	6.24	25 (67.6%)	20 (54.1%)	0
Ned & Mary Grossnickle	---23--- 2	4.13 (+1.74)	---9.9%--- 8.1E/0.9C	5.83	16 (69.6%)	10 (43.5%)	0
Kent Hall	---155--- 14	3.91 (+0.95)	---31.3%--- 23.1E/8.2C	5.45	112 (72.3%)	62 (40.0%)	1/155 = 0.6
Sue Hall, Diana Mrozinski & Cassidy Crunkilton	---40--- 12/6/6	5.28-#9 (+1.02)	---9.9%--- 2.8E/1.8C	5.92	30 (76.9%)	20 (51.3%)	2/39 = 5.1%
Bengt Hellgren	---23--- 2	2.26 (+0.67)	---18.8%--- 18.8E/0.0%	6.04	8 (34.8%)	4 (17.3%)	0
Wyleen High	---10--- 3	4.0 (+2.6)	---25.4%--- 22.4E/3.0C	5.75	10 (83.3%)	5 (41.7%)	0
Jim & Darlene Jakusz	---37--- 8	4.32 (+0.62)	---18.6%--- 14.8E/3.8C	6.22	27 (73.0%)	17 (45.9%)	0
Dale & Karen Jensen	---33--- 5	3.88 (+0.71)	---26.5%--- 23.6E/2.9C	4.06	21 (63.6%)	13 (39.4%)	0
Bob & Louise Juracka	---3--- 10	3.67 (+1.67)	---0.0%--- 0.0E/0.0C	6.67 #8	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	0
Ken & Megan Karth	---33--- 2	2.63 (-0.31)	---42.5%--- 20.9E/21.6E	4.88	22 (67.0%)	7 (21.2%)	0
Katie Kozak	---31--- 4	3.94 (+1.01)	---23.3%--- 16.4E/6.9C	5.81	23 (74.2)	13 (41.9%)	0
Chris & Bob Lane Jan Konkol & Alice Cheney	---29--- 6/6/2	3.41 (-0.59)	---44.4%--- 38.8E/5.6C	4.38	23 (79.3%)	8 (46.7%)	0
C. Lautermilch & Bessie Kmiecik	---47--- 7	8.43-#1 (+1.84)	---17.4%--- 17.2E/0.2C	8.81 #1	47 (100%)	40 (85.1%)	11 (23.4%)
Cathy Malzacher	---36--- 4	5.58-#7 (+2.25)	---21.5%--- 14.5E/7.0C	5.92	32 (88.9%)	19 (59.4%)	1 (2.8%)
Kim & Mary Ellen Marshall	---12--- 2	3.21 (+0.96)	---33.9%--- 22.1E/11.8C	5.57	11 (78.6%)	2 (14.3%)	0
Mike Moore	---44--- 2	5.86-#5 (+1.90)	---13.1%--- 11.8E/1.3C	7.80 #2	38 (86.4%)	25 (56.8%)	0
Benjamin & Craig Ontl	---39--- 3	4.05 (+1.11)	---24.7%--- 19.5E/5.2C	5.72	27 (69.2%)	15 (38.5%)	0
Gee Pope Melba Carey Alice Cheney	---38--- 6	4.66 (+0.35)	---24.0%--- 20.6E/3.4C	6.50 #10	31 (81.6%)	16 (42.1%)	0
David & Pauline Pray	---19--- 8	3.58 (+0.84)	---17.1%--- 17.1E/0.0C	6.11	12 (63.2%)	6 (31.6%)	0
Josh, Jen, Ben & Kyrie Reitz	---37--- 6	4.81-#10 (+0.86)	---26.0%--- 20.9E/5.1C	5.46	30 (81.1%)	19 (51.4%)	0
Tom & Amy Reitz	---47--- 5	4.47 (+1.24)	---23.6%--- 20.3E/3.3C	6.83 #6	33 (70.2%)	23 (48.9%)	1 (2.1%)
Ginny Rieves	---10--- 6	2.10 (-1.80)	---47.5%--- 22.5E/25.0E	5.70	7 (70.0%)	1 (10.0%)	0
Rick & Sharon Rothman	---36--- 7	4.19 (+1.00)	---22.1%--- 20.6E/1.5C	5.44	27 (75.0%)	14 (38.9%)	0
Joe Schultz	---28--- 11	2.79 (+1.09)	---18.7%--- 13.5E/5.2C	5.71	16 (57.1%)	4 (14.3%)	0
Bill & Jan Seybold	---35--- 4	2.40 (+0.03)	---27.6%--- 21.6E/6.0C	4.74	17 (48.6%)	10 (28.6%)	0
Mari Lynn Stezak	---20--- 9	3.30 (+1.65)	---14.3%--- 14.3E/0.0C	5.35	12 (60.0%)	5 (25.0%)	0
Penny Van Tassel	---37--- 3	3.92 (+0.73)	---18.5%--- 18.5E/0.0C	6.57 #9	25 (67.6%)	15 (40.5%)	0
Gordon Weber	---80--- 7	7.39-#2 (+0.58)	---22.0%--- 20.7E/1.7C	7.62 #3	79 (98.8%)	65 (81.2%)	15 (18.8%)
Tracy, Wayne & Faith Woodman	---60--- 6/4	6.35-#4 (+1.47)	---29.7%--- 29.32E/0.4C	7.00 #5	56 (93.3%)	39 (65.0%)	3 (5.0%)
Bill & Jill Ziehr	---29--- 10	3.24 (+0.49)	---30.4%--- 30.4E/0.0C	5.48	19 (65.5%)	9 (31.0%)	0
Brad Zinda	---41--- 7	5.51-#8 (+1.11)	---20.8%--- 13.4E/7.4C	6.32	35 (85.4%)	23 (56.1%)	0
Summary Totals	1425 Boxes 74 Monitors 348 Seasons	4.52 (+0.89)	---23.6%--- 19.0E/4.6C	6.12/ Nest Box	1056 (74.1%)	637 (44.7%)	35 (2.5%)

Table 3. Nest Box Results from Ft. McCoy for the 2015 Season.

NAME	Boxes/ Yrs. of Monitoring	EB Fledglings Per Nest Box (RQ)	Mortality Of Eggs & Chicks	Songbird Fledged Nest Bo	Boxes Occupied	Double Nests/% Of Nest Boxes	Triple Nests % of Nest Boxes
Jeff & Abby Duebler; William Sowers	40 6/6/2	6.88-#3 (+2.62)	23.6% 22.4E/1.2C	7.13 #4	40 (100%)	32 (80%)	0
Lautermilch, C. Kmieciak, Bessi	47 7/7	8.43-#1 (+1.84)	17.4% 17.2E/0.2C	8.81 #1	47 (100%)	40 (85.1%)	11 (23.4%)
Cathy Malzache	36 4	5.58-#7 (+2.25)	21.5% 14.5E/7.0C	5.92	32 (88.9%)	19 (59.4%)	1 (2.8%)
Weber, Gordon	80 7	7.39-#2 (+0.58)	22.0% 20.7E/1.7C	7.62 #3	79 (98.8%)	65 (81.2%)	15 (18.8%)
Tracy, Wayne & Faith Woodman	60 6/6/1	6.35-#4 (+1.47)	29.7% 29.3E/0.4C	7.00 #5	56 (93.3%)	39 (65.0%)	3 (5.0%)
FM Summary Totals: 2015	263 Boxes 10 Monitors 52 Yrs. Exp	7.01 RQ-FM (+1.51)	23.1% 21.4E/1.7C 23.6% = ABT* 19.0E/4.6C	6.12 = ABT	251 (96.6%) 74.1% = ABT	195 (74.1%) 44.7% = ABT	11.4% 2.5% = ABT

of our lowest in history. We fledged a total of 6.12 songbirds per nest box and 74.1% of our 1,425 nest boxes had bluebirds nest in them (laid at least one egg). A total of 60.3% of these boxes had double nests and 3.4% had triple nests.

Based on data I collected over my 9 years as Data Collection and Analysis Coordinator for BRAW, Ft. McCoy is the "Bluebird Capitol of WI". Over the past several years, Ft. McCoy has consistently performed at the top of the state bluebird trails, specifically the larger trails (Table #3)

For 2015 the performance was exceptional. Our ten monitors had 5 routes with 263 boxes that averaged 7.01 bluebirds fledged per box (1,844 fledglings). A remarkable total of 96.6% of the Ft. McCoy boxes had at least one bluebird egg laid in them and 76.7% of these boxes had double nests and 11.8% had triple nests.

Typically, Ft. McCoy has an unusually high mortality of bluebird chicks due to black flies. Last season there were almost no flies on the Fort and when there are, we have now found that permethrin sprays will control them. The overall mortality rate was a low 23.1% this season and only 1.7% was due to chick loss.

The keys to the high production of bluebirds at Ft. McCoy is due to ideal habitat and reduced competition from Tree Swallows. Ft. McCoy is a 60,000 acre reservation with a high content of oak/savannah habitat ideal for bluebirds. This area is in the driftless zone and has relatively few lakes. Consequently, there are few Tree Swallows at Ft. McCoy. In fact, the conditions at Ft. McCoy are representative of the conditions found throughout the driftless zone in western

and southwestern Wisconsin.

Figure 1 shows the growth in numbers of nest boxes on the ABT for our 14 years of operation. We added 71 boxes last season. Since we have 41 routes in 7 counties, maintaining our nest boxes is a challenge. Last fall I was no longer collecting and analyzing data for BRAW, so I visited and repaired 1,300 nest boxes—truly a challenge as repair and travel time averaged 15 minutes/box.

Figure 2: Total Fledglings Per Year on Audubon Eastern Bluebird Trail, 2002 - 2015

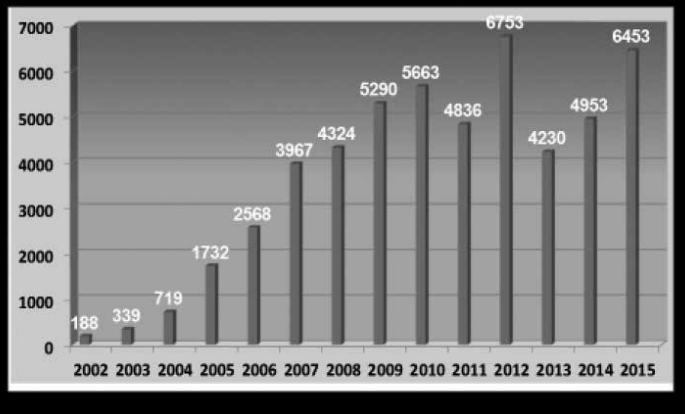


Figure 2 shows the fledglings per year on the ABT for the last 14 years. It is notable that our top season (2012) and 2nd second best season (2015) sandwiches two mediocre seasons, 2013 and 2014. The reason for these differences is found in the spring nesting conditions. It was quite mild in 2012 (eggs laid in March) and not bad in 2015, but very cold in 2013 and 2014. Our data clearly shows that if nesting time is lost in the spring, it can't be "made up" in the late summer. Since June 21 begins the shortening of day length and that does not vary from year to year, my hypothesis is that reliable day length shortening from year to year causes a reduced hormone production and limits the late summer nesting drive.

Figure 3 shows the average number fledged from our nest boxes over the past 14 years. Since 2004 we have averaged about 4.5 fledglings per box, reaching a high of 5.79/box in (continued from page 12)

Figure 1: Nest Boxes on Audubon Eastern Bluebird Trail, 2002 - 2015

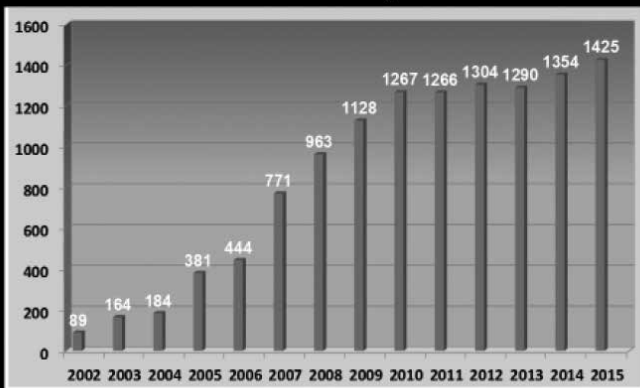
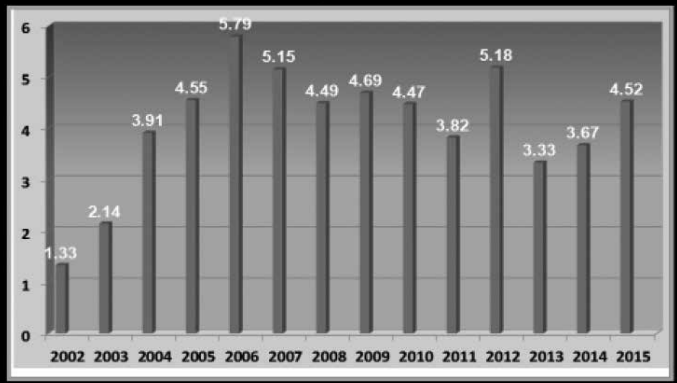


Figure 3: Fledglings Per Nest Box on Audubon Eastern Bluebird Trail, 2002 - 2015



2006 and a low of 3.33/box in 2013. The poor production of 2002 and 2003 is ignored because we were neophytes learning how to produce bluebirds.

For the past several years the ABT has been the largest and most productive in Wisconsin. For the past three years, our data indicate we are also the largest and most productive trail in North America. We have accomplished these outcomes by selecting ideal habitat (we move boxes if bluebirds have not nested in them for two consecutive years; no location should ever be considered permanent if the goal is to maximize bluebird production), spacing boxes at least 100 yards apart, putting predator guards on our mounting posts and using shallow boxes with oval holes (NABS-Style preferred).

We have faced a myriad of problems in our 14 years. We have made great progress in solving the major problems of black flies (use of Permethrin sprays), House Sparrows (Van Ert traps) and woodpecker enlargement of openings (wire open boxes for the winter). We are having increased trouble with raccoons climbing our predator guards. We hope to be able to report on our success with control of this predator in the fall of 2016.

Meanwhile, may the force of *Sialia sialis* be with you all.



**Looking for
Bluebird info?
www.braw.org**

The Quiet Activist

By Sue Cashman

Do you know people who see something that needs doing and step up and do it? This is about a person whose efforts saved the Eastern Bluebird.



What motivates people to take on such amazing tasks?

Following the thread of Lawrence Zeleny's life will give us some clues.

Zeleny was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1904. His father was a Professor of Physics at the University of Minnesota. Perhaps Lawrence gained his intellectual curiosity and desire for community service from his father. At that time in Minnesota, there were wide open spaces and plenty of bluebirds. As a 9 year old, he won a Sunday School contest for the child who could identify the greatest number of birds. The prize was a Chester A. Reed's classic pocket field guide. Armed with his father's binoculars and his new field guide, Lawrence took many hikes and became a young naturalist.

By the time he entered high school, he was building his own nest boxes. He learned how to trap and kill house sparrows, a necessity on today's bluebird trails. House Sparrows are non-native cavity nesters, which will kill bluebirds and make their messy nest over the top of the dead bird.

In January, 1921, Zeleny enrolled at the University of Minnesota at the age of 17. Before he graduated in 1925, three events occurred which affected the rest of his life. He contracted encephalitis and was unable to

study mathematics, his original goal. He enrolled in a class of ornithology, the study of birds, where he met his future wife, Olive. Zeleny received his doctorate in biochemistry in 1930. In 1935 he moved his family to Maryland and accepted a position as an associate chemist with the Department of Agriculture in Washington DC. He held that position for 25 years and worked on the grounds of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. Bluebirds were plentiful in that area until around 1950 when the invasion of starlings eliminated them.

Bluebirds are secondary cavity nesters. They have to find a hole in which to build their nests. Former sources such as dead trees and wooden fence posts disappeared. Trees were cut down and metal fenceposts replaced wooden ones. In addition, two non-native cavity nesters, the English Sparrow and starlings filled up any cavities that were available.

After his retirement in the late 60s, Dr. Zeleny had time to continue his work with bluebirds. He joined with other concerned naturalists and increased his activity. He began to write columns and articles as well as correspond with thousands of people. Among his writings were a book titled *The Bluebird: How You Can Help Its Fight for Survival*, published in 1976 by the University of Indiana Press and an article: "Song of Hope for the Bluebirds" in the June 1977 issue of *National Geographic Magazine*. Both created widespread interest and were a guide for Carol and John McDaniel, who were beginning their work with bluebirds in Lafayette County.

Zeleny "...became convinced that bluebirds could be helped only by many people, tens of thousands, working in small groups or as individuals, each informed as to the nature of the bluebirds' problems, and armed with a general plan for coping with them." (Boone, *Sialia*, Vol.17,#3, p.111.)

Around that time, he and several colleagues founded the North American Bluebird Society, NABS, an organization that today helps many bluebird enthusiasts.

Was Zeleny successful? Members of the Lafayette County Bluebird Society have fledged thousands of Eastern Bluebirds since John and Carol Mc-

Daniel first started their county bluebird organization. Although no one knows what the future holds, it is wonderful to report that this beautiful creature is no longer in danger. Being able to enjoy that flash of blue across a field on a sunny day remains possible. Whom do we have to thank...a gentle man who, in his youth, won a Sunday School contest by being able to name the most birds.

Are you ready for the spring migration, one of the favorite times of the year for birdwatchers everywhere? Be sure to check out www.lafayettecountybluebirdsociety.wordpress.com for updates and information about the 2016 schedule of events at the nature center and lots of information about the Eastern Bluebird. Happy Spring birdwatching!

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ribriver2@wildblue.net (Term to 12/16):

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Funding: Mike Helgren (see above)

WI Bluebird Editor: Patrick Ready, (see above)

Membership: Sue Schultz, 5221 Cheryl's Dr., Plover, WI 54467 • 715/341-5521 • sueschultz59@charter.net

Nest Box Designs: Fred Craig, (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 • 262/335-9843

Website: Ellen Lafouge, 9154 N. Fielding Rd., Bayside, WI 53127 • 414/352-6697; wibluebird@gmail.com

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

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- Use this form for membership, gift membership or to renew your membership. Life members do not need to renew each year. Please notify us of address change.

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- **Enclosed is my check/money order (do not send cash) made out to BRAW, Inc. for the following:**

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- \$20 individual or Family
- \$25 Contributing Annual
- \$100 Corporate Annual
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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 educational research (Master's thesis)
- 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 subscription
- This is a GIFT subscription.

Enclosed please find my check \$ _____

Mail this membership/subscription request to:
 BRAW, Inc.
 c/o Sue Schultz
 5221 Cheryl's Dr.
 Plover, WI 54467

- **Please note: This form appears in this newsletter as a convenience for all who wish to obtain membership. Membership renewals are due as of January 1 each year. The BRAW, Inc. bylaws stipulate that the winter issue (December issue) of Wisconsin Bluebird newsletter of the new year will be the last issue sent if your membership is not renewed before the Spring issue is printed.**

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

Trail name: _____	Box Number
Monitor: _____	

Date of visit	Is nest present	Bird Species	Number of eggs	Number of young	Number fledged	Notes:

Please send in your end of season data to: Data Summary Director, C/O Wild Birds Unlimited, 8402 Old Sauk Rd., Madison, WI 53562 Email: wisconsinbluebirds@gmail.com

BRAW EZ Summary Form

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

_____ 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

Thank You!

We need Your 2016 Data!

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 decide how you want to submit it.

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.

Above is a copy of the EZ Form. It's also available as a download on the website - www.braw.org. Look for the article on the homepage with links to the PDF or a

Word form you can copy and fill in and send via email.

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

**Data Summary Director
 C/O Wild Birds Unl.
 8402 Old Sauk Rd.
 Madison, WI 53562**

This form will also be printed in the next *Wisconsin Bluebird*.

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The mission and purpose of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc. is to monitor and increase the production of Eastern Bluebirds and other native cavity nesters through a coordinated statewide nest box construction and monitoring program.

Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin

Sue Schultz, Membership Chair
5221 Cheryl's Dr.,
Plover, WI 54467
www.braw.org



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**BRAW EZ
Summary Form**
See page 15

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 eggs hatch.



The chicks grow quickly being fed by both parents.



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