

Summer 2018  
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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

## Year of the Tree Swallow?

see page 2



"Mixed clutch" by Patrick Ready

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## A Word from the Prez



Could this be The Year of the Tree Swallow?

The last time I wrote was in the Spring issue and I said 'get your nest boxes ready—Spring is right around the corner'. Wow. If only I had known that winter was definitely not done yet! Two big snow storms came through in mid-April right when our bluebirds should have been getting down to nesting. Worse yet was the amount of snow

that fell. A good portion of the central part of the state got over 2 feet of heavy wet stuff. (Madison had over 12 inches in 4 days) There were even reports on television stations about Robins dying because of all the snow. Well more than Robins were affected!! Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Phoebes, Purple Martins, Tree Swallows were also affected just to name a few. Besides the snow, April was unbelievably cold. Temps were well below average for day and night. The ground didn't warm up as it normally does so worms and insects were not emerging for birds to feed on. I'm not sure if this was all over the state but I'd have to guess most of it was like this.

It wasn't too surprising when I started getting emails and phone calls in late April and early May, wondering where the bluebirds were. Some reported having them before the snow and then they disappeared. Others reported nests were started then abandoned. Then there were quite a few who said they hadn't seen a bluebird yet this spring. All I could think of was the weather was to blame. The saddest reports I got were from those who were finding several bluebirds dead in their boxes. When it gets too cold to nest and they can't find food, bluebirds will roost together in boxes, especially at night. When there is over 2 feet of snow on the ground and nights are very cold, they can't survive. I checked several of my trails but only found dead Tree Swallows. They do the same thing at night, roosting together to keep warm. But with lack of food many die.

The last few days of April quickly turned to summer-like conditions. I believe southern Wisconsin hit 79 degrees on April 30. It seemed like the bluebirds would be able to get back on track and nesting would begin in earnest. But it was slow to happen - at least in these parts. Most of my trail monitors were not seeing bluebirds and they weren't finding nests started either. Black-capped Chickadees were taking advantage of the available boxes. There were more Chickadee reports than anything else. Weird!!

There was one positive report coming from the Milwaukee area. Ellen Lafouge said she was off to her best start yet on the Mequon Golf Course. When everyone else was looking for nests, she was finding blue eggs in some of her boxes. Rick Fare down in Racine Co. was the first report I saw of bluebirds hatching. So eastern Wisconsin was doing fine at least. There was reason to remain optimistic.

It was mid-May before I found any nest attempts by bluebirds. It was a full month or more behind schedule but still enough time for them to pull off 2 broods by summer's end. It seemed to be fine because the Tree Swallows also were set back and I actually thought many had died in

April from the cold and snow giving the Blues an advantage. Wrong!!

Now reports were coming in that Tree Swallows were taking over bluebird nests. As soon as the bluebird hens had nests built and were about to start egg laying, the swallows moved in and added feathers and laid eggs. This is unusual behavior and may have been caused by their late start to nesting. The photo on the cover is from a trail at Research Park in Madison. I will keep an eye on it to see if the blue egg hatches. The swallow is rotating it with her own eggs so I think it will hatch.

Now I began to wonder why was I getting so many reports of fewer bluebirds or none returning to reliable sites but Tree Swallows, Chickadees and Wrens were all doing just fine? Was mid-April much harder on Eastern Bluebirds than other cavity nesters? Wrens weren't back so they didn't get hit at all. Tree Swallows migrate back over several weeks as some come from southern states and others make the longer migration from South America. Since there are about 3-4 pair of Tree Swallows to each pair of Bluebirds, they definitely have the advantage. Their aggressive behavior, though, is unusual from my experience. I have witnessed their aggression against bluebirds before but nothing like this year.

Then there are the reports of no bluebirds returning at all. Most of these were from the northern part of the state but also from Dane Co. On one of my trails near Verona where I usually have at least 2 bluebird pairs, I have yet to see one. So far it is a major Tree Swallow trail. Oh boy!

I don't know if that means this is The Year of the Tree Swallow or not. I guess we will have to wait and see how the data reports come in at the end of the season. I don't expect it to be a banner year for bluebirds but who knows, monitoring trails can be full of surprises. Maybe things will turn around as the season progresses. I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

I'd like to congratulate one of our board members as he recently graduated from UW Stevens Point. Congrats to Brad Zinda and best wishes on your future endeavors. Thank you for serving as one of our board of directors.

Brad is resigning from the board as he pursues career opportunities so that leaves us with yet another opening to fill. Directors meet 3 time per year plus the Annual Convention. Currently we meet at a restaurant in Mauston right off I-90/94 usually the 1st Saturday of June, September & November. Our meetings seldom run over 3 hours and then some of us may stay for lunch and socializing. At the meeting we follow an agenda and make decisions regarding bluebird restoration and the best ways we can continue to promote our mission. "It's a little bit of work but it's a lot of fun!" is what I like to tell everyone. If you can serve for 3 years let me know. I'll get you more information. I'm sure our Blues will be grateful!

Happy Trails!

Patrick Ready  
BRAW President

# Monitor Data for 2017 Season

## Steve Fallon, BRAW Data Director

The statewide total for bluebirds fledged in 2017 reports was 23,266. The total number of cavity nesters fledged reported this year was 38,605. As a reminder the 2016 values were 26,440 bluebirds fledged and 44,336 for the total cavity nesters fledged. The 2017 Fledging numbers are again lower than the 2016 values. Unfortunately, once again, the decline seemed to be weather related. Numerous monitors reported having a very tough year as cold and wet conditions came and then returned during the nest season, providing a double whammy to our feathered friends. Monitors mentioned eggs unhatched and dead chicks on many reports with hypothermia suspected as the main culprit.

Name	# of Boxes	BBs Fledged
Dean Krueger	3	5
Kris Perlberg	4	19
Lori Ainsworth	11	45
Ken & Signe Onsrud	101	245
Ron Brake	15	13
Bill Kelly	9	0
Elizabeth Wheeler	7	4
Melissa Warner	3	0
Dennis Persinger	8	14
Bill and Donna Stehling	67	125
BonnieHamer	24	3
CarolMennen	1	5
James Mand	14	10
Bob Holtz	1	4
William Fruin	14	73
Dennis Kirschbaum	19	98
Jack Freeman	1	9
Jon Beckman	14	50
Melissa McNeil	39	133
Ruth Witt Jensen	1	4
Harry Peterson	7	12
Ray Pinter	69	117
DaveMistereck	31	70
Madelynn Miezio	16	9
Dan Savin	8	4
DaveLucey	36	72
Deb (Bob) Nicholson (Lucas)	45	76
Jim and Dorothy Beix	56	134
Jim and Dorothy Beix	40	165
SharonStark	7	12
Mike and Jean Curran	3	13
SylviaMarek	15	18
Greg Olson	1	8
Marianne Jensen	25	37
Marianne Jensen	3	7
Ben Teich	63	93
RogerMeyer	80	196

Name	# of Boxes	BBs Fledged	Name	# of Boxes	BBs Fledged
Bob Butzer	17	7	Phyllis LaPine	30	42
Amy Bachman	9	50	Kathryn Hardtke	5	10
Norman & Elizabeth Dickman	25	20	Dwight Offord	9	15
Jan Ronchetto	12	44	Claire Romanak	27	89
John Loehlein	44	42	Wendy Lukes	22	27
Jack Saltes	24	45	Terry Glanzman	437	1601
Len Place	35	88	Tim Meyer	6	9
Rita Gundry	34	70	Therese Wilk	34	95
Rita Gundry	7	17	Tina Bartholomew	7	39
Paul Klawiter	35	72	Bruce DeLong	24	32
Kate Anderson	25	66	Lowell Peterson	30	49
Janice Rath/Jean Anhalt	32	133	Don Pritzl	61	197
Elisabeth Atwell	35	127	Carol Forsythe	12	26
David and Patti Becker	27	120	Joan Hoy	1	5
Woody and Madge Bishop	30	128	William Schlueter	4	12
Mary Bratz/ Dick Stephens	31	102	Ralph and Dennis Konrath	30	65
Bruce and Jerri Brewer	35	180	Keith-Jenneane Smith	6	4
Fred and Joyce Camacho	34	161	Keith-Jenneane Smith	2	0
Wendy, Scott and			Paul Wenzel	15	80
Samantha Carlson	31	124	Brian Logan	2	4
Alice Chaney/Melba Carey	33	165	Jon Frohling	9	37
Konrad and Nancy Chojnacki	27	89	GordonWeber	30	87
Mary Dahm	35	190	DavidFarris	5	10
Sharon Schwab			David Farris		
KarenDostal	22	63	DorothyMessner	6	0
Jeff and Abby Duebler	40	211	Jim Goodno	9	8
William Sowers			Jim Goodno	16	23
Warren and Janet Evans	35	113	Mark and Sue Foote-Martin	35	32
Stacy and Elijah Grajkowski	14	16	JD Arnston	22	0
Ned and Mary Grossnickle	21	88	Mark and SueFoote-Martin	32	0
Melissa Guthmiller	20	127	Amy Ihlenfeldt	10	6
Nichole Reyna			Bill Forrester	11	9
Kent Hall	144	576	Mark and Jenny McGinley	13	0
Diana Mrozinski	38	162	Debbie Walters	35	32
Sue Hall			Bradley Sherman	41	60
Wyleen and Clark High	12	47	Ronald Balsiger	12	12
Jim and Darlene Jakusz	37	95	Mavis Hermodson	23	34
Dale and Karen Jensen	34	140	Lynn Crawford	9	15
Bob and Louise Juracka	3	5	Arthur Melius	2	8
Chris and Bob Lane	25	88	Karen Haralson	27	125
Jan Konkol			Phyllis Reedy	6	9
Bessie Kmiecik	47	297	Beth Bartoli	8	15
Charlie Lautermilch			Dee Freeman	20	47
Ken and Megan Karth	37	68	Deb Rohde	8	6
Jean Klein	16	44	Erika Zar	20	8
Michael Moore	45	185	Patrick Ready	14	30
Benjamin,Lauren			Elizabeth (Betty) Downs	4	16
and CraigOntl	29	90	Elizabeth (Betty) Downs	10	63
Gee Pope	39	130	Austin Daugherty	33	22
Cathy Malzacher	46	155	Melissa Bruder	28	111
Sharon Teske			David & Kelly Marwitz	168	636
Kim and Mary Ellen Marshall	17	56	David & Kelly Marwitz	29	81
Tom and Amy Reitz	44	170	David Marwitz	16	82
Ginny Rieves	10	35	Jim Brase	9	0
Sandy Schultz			Corinne Palmer	9	8
Joe Schultz	30	115	Ronald Lenz	5	4
Bill and Jan Seybold	34	152	Jan McGinnis	107	541
Marilynn and Ken Slezak	19	60	Kayla Reed	10	4
Gordon Weber	80	454	Walter Jost	34	84
Bill and Jill Ziehr	29	94	James Kronenberg	9	6
Michael Johnson	18	43	Debbie Anderson	40	222
Barb Kellermann	6	5	Mary Holleback	28	21
Kathy Krouse	14	35	Steve Mayer	53	97
Daniel Schultz	11	16	Steve Mayer	26	55
Ruby Thomas	18	29	Vicki Tollakson	8	25

Name	# of Boxes	BBs Fledged	Name	# of Boxes	BBs Fledged	Name	# of Boxes	BBs Fledged
Nancy Lally	15	14	Gail Van Haren	15	34	Carol McDaniel	24	43
Ray Palenik	19	86	Marjorie Andrae	8	31	Mary Holleback	28	21
Ruth Schoenwetter	12	27	Joni Crave	4	8	John Liechty	24	54
Curt Caslavka	17	42	Joni Crave	14	31	John Meyer	54	15
Sue Cashman	26	35	Nathan Robertson	13	20	Wade Botsford	1	4
James Barth	64	270	Nick Anderson	14	53	Ellen Klusmeier	47	39
Robert Tamm	6	33	Rodney Courtier	11	38	Theresa Cartwright	18	38
Stephen Zimmermann	15	37	Rodney Courier	66	90	Ellen Lafouge	2	9
Jim Higgins	35	58	Ann E S Wick	142	416	Ellen Lafouge	28	106
Don Debor	3	3	Eric Wickstrom	26	78	Walter Kugler Jr.	3	18
Marsh Present	1	4	Mary Jo Fleming	25	41	Lee Curtiss	95	180
Cordula VanDenHeuvel	2	0	Sally Keyel	24	41	Patricia Becker	16	0
Chantel McLeod	2	9	Mark Holey	6	10	Bernie Hoefger	13	28
Victoria Boestedt	1	0	Jack Bartholmai	88	156	Kristine Vaughn	20	64
Joe Watt	2	9	Holly Bartholmai	24	70	Janet Kuyoth	2	10
Cordula VanDenHeuvel	15	32	Charlotte Lukes	23	89	Al Lancaster	2	5
Jean Altergott	15	22	Nicole Shutt	115	107	Amy Labiszak	2	5
Alyssa Hockers	6	0	Nathan Oster	10	19	James Sterzinger	8	4
Cordula VanDenHeuvel	2	0	Mary Sobol	13	11	Jackie Lindahl	11	57
Tammy Frey	14	39	Rich Dirks	5	12	Bonnie Lumberg	9	11
Lora Schreiber	12	12	Julie Schroeder	1	7	Tim Stoffel	29	19
Maureen & Joyce			Jane Swagel	3	4	Jennifer and David Wenzel	19	15
Kauffmann & Anderson	6	11	Charles Bergsten	31	24	Steve Anderson	23	117
Barbie Allen	76	101	Gene Birr	2	8	Pete Tabor	1	4
Barbie Allen	22	48	Gene Birr	108	266	Leif Tolokken	48	236
Barbie Allen	5	8	Ellie Smith	17	58	Leif Marking	95	442
Barbie Allen	101	59	Rick Fare	25	50	Joni Welda	8	30
Jolie Wood	11	17	Rick Fare	26	68	Dave Fonger	65	30
Elizabeth Palmer	1	8	Steve Schleitwiler	1	0	Dan and Gail Filzen	9	34
Shari Kastner	15	22	Steve Schleitwiler	5	8	Brad Foss	5	8
Shari Kastner	11	17	Lynn Crawford	9	15	Bill Balmer	9	51
Jim Hess	26	81	Nathan Oster	10	13	Fred Schaldach	13	26
Karen Koebel	3	4	Nathan Oster	10	19	Harry and Ellen Caulum	25	75
Kenneth Vlasak	2	6	Joanne DeVetter	3	18	Jan Brady	6	24
Steven Petznick	5	16	Glenna Peters	6	25	John Leary	9	19
Mosquito Hill Nature Center	16	34	Chuck Oehmcke	4	5	Louis Benchina	25	62
Rodney Lindell	3	5	Ilene and Paul Kronschnabel	35	46	Morgan Jostad	12	36
Cindy & Jim Schwisow	2	7	Dennis Jensen	20	23	Ron Parker	1	7
Eugene Lyons	28	53	Gail Van Haren	20	53	Stephanie Lubinsky	14	42
Susan Clairmont	6	9	Jerry Gerndt	16	45	Tim Knudson	10	34
Susan Clairmont	14	10	Jerry Gerndt	14	35	Verdel Dawson	14	75
Wendy Bekx	16	43	Jerry Gerndt	27	53	Mark and Joyce Landmark	1	4
Karen Johnson	12	19	Jerry and Dick Hanson Gerndt	24	50	Tom Michelsen	16	34
Sandy and Ed Miller	18	26	Jerry (Dick Poquette) Gerndt	37	118	Jason Nickels	30	44
Ruthann Meiers	43	143	Myron Byers	64	295			
Dale and Doris Moody	10	45	Pat Handrich	11	17			
Dale and Doris Moody	68	222	Bob Fox	170	382			
Kathy Fredrickson	5	9	Bob Fox	194	323			
Joe Raboin	16	19	Marilyn Eberhardt	24	144			
Joe Schultz	17	90	Darrel Eberhardt	142	839			
Susannah Sample	15	17	Bud Klepps	14	84			
Steve Sample	33	79	Larry Casper	67	282			
brenda keys	20	21	Greg Krueger	20	78			
Michael Helgren	41	202	Bill Schapfel	20	74			
Patrick Hasburgh	10	5	Jim Johnson	3	8			
Kathy Dreikosen	30	104	Andy Chickoski	71	123			
MikeFort	28	82	Darlene Neisner	18	28			
Carol Becker	10	24	Sheryl Gilbertson	12	9			
Pam Heilman	5	22	Marcel Kulas	7	16			
Helen Pugh	17	47	Bruce Schaffner	25	31			
Stan Rosenstiel	15	25	John and Pat Heiden	11	64			
Sue Eagle	14	34	John and Pat Heiden	49	12			
Susan Basten	7	25	Kim Cates	15	31			
Jeanne Mawbey	7	9	Anne Moretti	13	14			
John Krowicz	18	4	Kathleen King	34	23			

# Of Boxes 8415  
Boxes used by BBs = 4715  
BB eggs laid = 28473  
BB eggs hatched = 23266  
BBs Fledged = 23266

Please let me know if you find errors or omissions. scfallon@charter.net



# 2018 BRAW Convention Report

By Claire Romanak, Secretary

The 32<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin was held at the Beaver Creek Reserve in Fall Creek on April 7. A total of 66 bluebird fans and various wildlife specialists were in attendance on a cold spring day.

President Pat Ready welcomed participants and opened the convention at 9:30 AM. Pat remarked that Snow Buntings and Horned Larks are still being seen and polled members to see where Eastern Bluebirds were being seen in the state. The northern third of the state did not have Bluebirds yet but they had returned to the southern two thirds. Next year's convention should be somewhere in the southwest corner of the state where the early spring weather should be better. Pat also thanked Rita Gundry and others who supplied us with coffee, cookies and rolls this morning. He reminded members that we are able to keep the convention costs low because it is subsidized by the silent auction. He encouraged members to bid on items. He also encouraged members let him know if they had any suggestions for future conventions.

Pat then introduced Dan Schroeder, BRAW Treasurer who gave us the Treasurers report. Dan presented a chart with a 10 year history, from 2007-2017, of our revenue vs. expenses. Our expenses had begun exceeding our revenue in 2013, but that trend began to improve in 2017 as our revenue was \$113 more than expenses. In the first quarter of this year our revenue has exceeded expenses by \$1242.

Pat then proceeded to the eighth annual awards presentation. The *Bluebirder of the Year Award* was presented to **Barb Allen** from Green Bay. Barb has set up new trails and refurbished older trails in four counties. She covers four golf courses and monitors an amazing 231 nest boxes in total.

**Leif Marking**, who was not able to attend, was presented with a *Director Emeritus Award*. Leif was on the



board for many years and was in charge of our nest box designs. He did many studies that enhanced our knowledge of the Eastern Bluebird and produced DVD's that promoted them.

The *Merit Award* was given to **Bill & Donna Stehling**, County Coordinators for Sauk County. They monitor 67 nest boxes at Badger Lands plus other locations as well. Donna spoke of her enjoyment of teaching and the pleasure she gets showing students their Bluebird trail.

The *Educator of the Year* was awarded to **Memuna Khan**. Memuna started a 25 box Bluebird trail in 2006 with the assistance of Kent Hall. Her students monitor, take growth data and band all of the birds. Her students also do data analysis on climate, winter severity, nest box occupancy and first egg laid.

The *Lifetime Achievement Award* went to **JP Lafouge**, who was not able to attend. JP has been our web

designer but he and his wife Ellen have retired.

Pat Ready then introduced the board members in attendance – **Claire Romanak, Brad Zinda, Dan Schroeder, Fred Craig, Mike Helgren and Steve Sample**. He noted that board members Steve Fallon and Dave Lucey were not able to attend.

Steve Sample gave the next presentation, the 2017 Data Summary compiled by Steve Fallon. The total fledged in 2017 was 23,266 and we were again the leading state for Bluebird production. Steve showed us several charts, one comparing 2016 vs 2017 statistics, one with 2017 total fledged by county and trends from 1994-2017. Climate continues to be the biggest factor in nesting success.

Pat Ready then introduced our first speaker, **Steve Betchkal**, with a *Birding by Ear* program. Steve is an ornithologist who has written 5 books, received 21 emmys for news and an

continued next page



Edward R. Murrow award. Steve gave a lively and fun program on why birds sing, how their anatomy differs from ours and how to use mnemonics to master their calls. He taught us the calls of the Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl and Saw whet Owl to much amusement. Steve also gave us info on websites to download calls. He also spoke some on conservation issues that particularly effect birds such as climate change, lights out at night, guy wires on towers, cats outdoors and urban sprawl.

We adjourned at noon for a lunch. The silent auction was closed promptly at 1:00 PM and the winning bidders were able to claim their items and pay for them.

President Ready then introduced the next program, *Wisconsin Wolves*. Ray Leonard was unable to make it so **Scott Theil** filled in for him. Scott works with the Timber Wolf Information Network which was start-

ed in the 1980's. They run workshops at Beaver Creek Reserve, Sandhill and Treehaven in Wisconsin. We learned about the origins, physiology, life in a pack and life within a wolf population. We saw the difference between a cougar skull and a wolf skull, the historical and present day prey of wolves and how to identify a wolf vs coyote track. We also learned how wolves communicate, raise their young and defend their territories. Scott answered questions on how the wolf count is done, how wolves interact with bears and how wolves made their way into Wisconsin. We also learned about the threats to wolves, that most pups do not survive and that they are susceptible to parvovirus, distemper and starvation. In the 1960's the only wolves left in the lower 50 states were in the arrowhead of Minnesota, now there are about 925 in the state. In a study that was done both in Wisconsin and Minnesota on

fawn predation it was discovered that the #1 predator was Bobcat, followed closely by Black Bear. Scott gave us a lot of good information and it was very interesting.

At 2:30, following the Wisconsin Wolves presentation, Pat Ready announced a return to the "*Ask the Bluebird Experts*" panel discussion. The participants were Pat Ready, Fred Craig, Gordon Webber and Gene Birr. The session opened with a discussion on Wren problems and the habitats that favor them. Then there was a question on what the current recommendations were for placing nest boxes, 100 yds apart or some sort of pairing. Pat Ready stated that Wisconsin stands alone in not pairing boxes. Joe O'Halloran's study proved that pairing does not help much for Bluebirds. If it works for you OK, but BRAW does not promote it.

Another question was on the mortality rate on the first nesting last year, many dead in boxes, some fully feathered. It was very cold last spring, there was not enough food. Female does not brood after they are 6 days old, some suggestions were to use handwarmers under the nest, make sure the nest is not wet & replace if necessary. Fred Craig supports using a mesh screen that is 1/4" off of the floor under the nest to help keep it dry. In the case of fully feathered nestlings, they probably starved because the parents could not find food. Ready stated that he lost 45 eggs and chicks, there were large Tree Swallow losses as well. Gene brought an interesting box that he will try out, it's supposedly will deter House Sparrows. The house has a 3" hole cut into the roof that is covered with plexiglass. The House Sparrow likes a dark interior and it is felt that the sun shining into the box might keep them out. Fred Craig questioned whether this design would make the box interior too hot, Leif documented that the young will die if the box interior gets to 105 degrees. A question was asked about a nest box that has two entrance holes, one in front and one on the side. Supposedly the House Sparrow is not attracted to that either. Pat asked if anyone had success using a K box which is also supposed to deter House Sparrows. There is an issue that the



# Summer 2018 CC Report

By Carol McDaniel

Each County Coordinator has their own trails and encourage other bluebirders to maintain, monitor and report to BRAW on those. It seems that we always get fired up about bluebirding in the Spring but, sometimes, that enthusiasm gets overshadowed with Summer activities, responsibilities and sweltering heat. I know I speak on behalf of all CCs to encourage everyone to keep the dedication to their trail alive throughout the nesting season. Information gathered from weekly trail checks provides BRAW with information on how the bluebirds and other birds are doing.

A few issues ago, I put a list of the Wisconsin Bluebird newsletters that I needed to complete an entire set starting from BRAW's beginning issue in 1986. Not only did I get responses from several of you, but one member, Dale Luedtke, offered his complete set to me. He brought the set to the BRAW Annual Meeting and Steve Sample brought them to me on Saturday, April 14, when he came to the Spring Meeting of the Lafayette County Bluebird Society. What a wonderful resource for anyone who wants an article or information about the bluebirds in Wisconsin from 1986 to the present. Feel free to contact me for copies. Other folks who responded and sent issues to me were: Sharon Woeffel, Rod Courtier, Pat Ready, and Myron Byers. All of those issues are included in my personal issues. Thanks to everyone who helped make this goal a reality!

County Coordinators who have activity reports since the January issue are published here. Many have presented workshops, given talks, helped establish trails, worked with youth, and promoted BRAW by handing out literature. Contact your County Coordinator and let them know how your bluebirds are doing. You can find the contact information on the BRAW website.

Elsewhere in this issue, you can read about veteran bluebirder, **Don Pritzl**, **Kewaunee County Coordinator** and

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A successful silent auction brought in money for BRAW and made for happy shoppers that took home some quality items. A big thanks to all who donated items.



(Left) Gene Birr holds a "Skylight" box meant to deter House Sparrows. Plexiglass covers the top to keep out rain. (Above) BRAW's very first president Harvey Halvorson with current president Pat Ready. Harvey was glad to see the organization still going strong. A great meeting of the minds . . . we both like bluebirds!!!

Van Ert trap won't work on that box. Gene spoke about the Noel wire cages on nest boxes for raccoons, cats and snakes. He states that he has them on 75% of his boxes and has suffered no losses in 3 years. Pat spoke of Leif's video of a raccoon climbing up a pvc guard at night and eating eggs. Fred states he has had good luck with pvc but he keeps it waxed. Lowell Peterson is having a problem with Tree Swallows taking over his boxes at Willow River State Park, but one box with an overhanging pine branch is

not used by Tree Swallows. Members have used stovepipes, greased poles, slinkys and barbed wire to keep raccoons away with varying success. There was a question of what could be done about bears tearing up boxes. One member is trying peppermint extract on a cotton ball under the house to see if it works. Steve Sample wonders if the garlic that is used on cattle to keep ticks away might work as a deterrent.

The meeting adjourned at 3:04 PM.

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how he got interested in bluebirds many years ago.

**Jim Beix, River Falls County:** Lowell Peterson, Jim Higgins (St.Croix Co. Bluebird trail on Kinnickinnic river) and I have done 3 BRAW presentations: Interstate Park at St.Croix Falls on March 18, New Richmond presentation at a transitional care center in March 11, and The Great River Road Learning Center in Prescott on April 8. Lowell did a slide presentation on cavity nesters, bluebird life cycle and predators while Jim and I embellish with an assortment of boxes, experiences of monitoring etc.

**Pat Ready, Dane County:** I have given 3 BB talks so far, acquired 140 donated nest boxes for Dane Co trails, am doing a Kestrel talk in River Falls this weekend (March) and putting in 2 new trails in April. I also worked with an Eagle Scout to get new boxes made for the UW Arboretum in Madison.

**Carol McDaniel, Lafayette and Grant Counties:** I presented a bluebird program at the United Methodist Church in Monroe to a group of 30 seniors in April. I will be doing another talk at the Monticello library on May 14. On March 15, I was on hand at the Bluebird Nest Nature Center in Darlington to answer bluebird trail questions. Sometime in June the Lafayette County Bluebird Society will be having a bluebird trail hike along an established trail and I will lead the hike. This is a pot luck picnic and a great opportunity to learn more about bluebirds.

**Stan Rosenstiel, Racine County:** Rick Fare got permission to put up a trail at Cliffside Park in Caledonia. This is a Racine Co. Park. He also put up 3 boxes at Ecojustice Center. Rick will put up a small (3 box) trail in a small park in Crestview (Caledonia). He gave 2 Bluebird talks on March 28 and April 14.

**Rita Gundry, Eau Claire County:** As I write this article on April 15, 2018, for the Summer 2018 issue of Wisconsin Bluebird, our weather is wretched for our favorite friends. I

trust they are resourceful and will find ample nutrition and shelter in the woods, yards and nearby roadsides, in spite of the snow and blizzard-like conditions.

This year, I am gearing my efforts toward attracting new BRAW members and am hoping they will join our monitoring efforts. My brother, Larry Liegel, a seasoned bluebirder and BRAW member, is a vital spark in this endeavor, as well. New bluebirders who attended our recent conference, Pam and Gary Ida of rural Eau Claire, got a boost from Larry with 12 nest boxes built by him and his help in placing them in ideal settings on their rural property. He will also assist them in their monitoring efforts this first year. Kathy Schauer, who attended our BRAW annual conference for the first time, lives on the outskirts of Eau Claire and received a three-hour visit from Larry with bluebird troubleshooting tips to help her on her existing trail.

Beaver Creek Reserve, where we had our conference, has an established bluebird trail, but does not report to BRAW, although they do monitor their trail. A group of golfers from Hickory Hills Golf Course, south of Eau Claire, has renowned luck on their trail that encircles the golf course. Finally, a distant neighbor of mine has a number of well-maintained Peterson houses. I will visit him this next week.

My goal is to increase our number of reported fledglings by encouraging these bluebird lovers to join BRAW and report their season's findings. They will receive the Spring 2018 Issue of Wisconsin Bluebird along with BRAW's blue informational flyer.

On another note, has anyone reading this column had any experience with the slot box style of bluebird box? I have been seeing them in wild bird supply catalogs and local pet stores the past few months. These might be more practical for sparrow discouragement than trapping them, in my situation. You can contact me at 715-579-5523 or e-mail gundryrk@uwec.edu. Thank you!

**Kathy Dreikosen, Green County:**

Bluebirds are slow to arrive at my two trails this Spring. I think the last snow we had slowed their progress and had, on my trails, some tragic results. On one of my trails I found a dead male and hen in the same box and they appeared to be the result of an attack. In another box I found a dead male with the same injuries. I'm assuming that they took shelter in the boxes and may have been weak from lack of food. There were a few boxes with bluebird nests but no eggs at this time.

On my second trail of 14 boxes I did have one bluebird nest with one egg and 3 more nests with 0 eggs. Sparrow nests were plentiful and they have begun laying eggs. Tree Swallows are back and I had 3 nests, 0 eggs. No wrens here yet but it will be soon. The most exciting picture is the goose on top of one of my boxes at the Country Club. It's enjoying the view.

### **Black Flies will be Bad!!**

The hot humid weather we are experiencing all of a sudden creates perfect conditions for a Black Fly (Turkey Gnats) hatch. The flies will bite bluebird chicks during the night and dehydrate them to the point of death! Here is the best remedy BRAW can suggest to prevent losses.

It's best to use Permethrin-10 poultry insecticide. Dilute it to 0.50% concentration and place it into an aspirator bottle such as a "Windex Bottle". When you find black flies around your nest box (swarms hover like a large fruit fly) use this protocol to prevent the hen from abandoning the nest box and the death of the chicks: A) spray the opening and all cracks on the box, both inside and out B) if there are eggs in the nest, put a small, clear jar over the eggs and spray the nest thoroughly C) if there are chicks in the nest, make sure they are at least 3 days of age—mist thoroughly (spray does not harm the eyes) D) the 2nd week, spray the hole and cracks on the outside of the box only, plus the nest if the eggs have not hatched and spray the chicks for the 2nd and final time.



## Get to Know Your County Coordinator

My name is Don Pritzl. I have been the Kewaunee County Coordinator for BRAW for many years. My interest in birds began at a very young age back on the farm where I was born in Manitowoc County. I caught the fever from my older brother Norbert. Norb had a book in his closet, "The Birds of North America" and I used to sneak into his room to look at this book. I was fascinated by all the color pictures of the different birds and how each one had adapted to its place in the environment. We had many birds around the farm (most of them were sparrows), and it was interesting to see how they were all similar yet very different. Norb had a particular love for bluebirds. In the late 1950's we made a cattle lane to take the cows from the barn to a pasture about one-half mile away. Many of the fence posts for this lane were 8010 inch cedar that we had cut in the cedar swamp at Collins Marsh. I remember these posts very well as I dug many of the holes my hand myself. Some of the posts were partly hollow and it seemed that these would have a bluebird nest in them. While bringing the cows home for milking, it was fun to check all of these posts and watch the bluebirds. Our farm was home to many different birds. I remember while cutting hay, there was always a cloud of Bob-o-links, red-winged blackbirds, meadowlarks, and ground nesting sparrows along with the occasional grey partridge or ring-necked pheasant nest. It was amazing to see how the Bob-o-links and black birds could weave their nests around several tall grass stems or weeds.

After high school I went off to college, then to the military and finally a job in northeastern Illinois. I lost contact with my beloved bluebirds and didn't see one for about 20 years. When I was hired to manage a farm supply cooperative in Kewaunee County in 1980, I finally had some permanent roots. The bluebird was always in the back of my mind, and I began to search for information on nest boxes. "Mr. Bluebird", Norb, told me about BRAW. I began putting up boxes but didn't have much success



Don Pritzl giving a bluebird presentation at Bird City Algoma on April 7

for a number of years. I was so excited to have my first nest in a box, but it turned out to be a sparrow. My first report to BRAW was in 1991. I had 12 nests, 60 eggs and 37 fledged. I have continued to report to BRAW each year since and have fledged over 3600 bluebirds.

It has been an interesting and fulfilling hobby. I still get a thrill when I open a box and find a neat bluebird nest with 5 blue eggs!

Each year is a new challenge with weather conditions, predators, changing landscapes, and urbanization. I've had as many as 75 boxes out, most of them along roadsides, and I used to monitor them with my bike. I've since cut back on numbers to 60 boxes and the bike has been replaced by my truck. There have been few surprises over the years, all the eggs don't hatch and all the young don't fledge, but it's fun to watch.

I've had nests of bluebirds, tree swallows, wrens, chickadees, sparrows and an occasional nest of wasps. My most unusual was a Great-crested Flycatcher with several pieces of snake skin in the nest. I've had boxes shot or pieces by hunters, run over by cars going off the road and several boxes stolen.

I will continue to spread the word about the beautiful bluebird, the bird with the blue of the sky on his back. Hopefully, some will get the "fever" like I did.

## New & Returning Members!

By Mike Ray, Membership Chair

- \* Ellen Marie & Jean-Pierre Lafouge - Milwaukee
- \* Bernice A Meyer - Neenah
- \* Michael Ziegeweid - De Pere
- \* Mary Regel - Waunakee
- \* Gail Smith - Middleton
- \* Kyle Koelsch - Poynette
- \* John Thiede - Eagle River (AK)
- \* Dennis Jensen - Burlington
- \* Karen Schauer - Eau Claire
- \* David Zachman - Pewaukee
- \* Ralph Konrath - Milwaukee
- \* Jon Straight - Richland Center
- \* Joyce Burmester - Madison
- \* Martina Lindseth - Eau Claire
- \* Shirley Scholtz - Wind Lake
- \* Pat & Steve Cox - Hudson
- \* Roger Brey - Oshkosh
- \* Monticello Public Library - Monticello
- \* Visit Rome WI, Inc. - Nekoosa
- \* Patriot Golf Course - Abrams

### Donors over \$100:

- \* Kristine Vaughn \$200 in honor of Aunt Joan Liechty
- \* Michael Mordan - Fond du Lac

## Looking for:

- Nest box plans?
- Trail Info?
- Monitoring Forms?
- Resources?
- The BRAW Store?
- Contacts?



Go to [www.braw.org](http://www.braw.org)

NOW PLAYING!!!

## To Kill a House

### Sparrow

By Bob Tamm

Harper Lee... Relax. I doubt this 'sequel' will threaten your Award-winning novel. Atticus Finch... a.k.a. Gregory Peck - don't worry. I don't think I need a skilled attorney like yourself to defend my admittedly biased feelings towards *PASSER DOMESTICUS*, the House Sparrow – which tends to give all our true native sparrows a bad name.

But it's true! I don't like 'em, period. No house sparrow is safe from me. Adults, chicks, eggs – they're history if they dare invade my territory. Many of you reading this obviously feel the same way – I know. But... there are a few out there who have this dilemma: They love bluebirds, love monitoring their trail, and they may even use a Van Ert trap when one of their boxes is being usurped. The trap springs – bag goes over the box – and out he/she flies. And then what? To kill a house sparrow – or not??? Some can't – trust me.

On Tuesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, I held a Power Point presentation at the Radisson Hotel for the Menomonee Falls Wild Ones chapter. With Shari Kastner's able assistance, we had a nice lively two hour meeting, in which two people won a complete bluebird

nest box, post, and hardware. One gal was so excited to win – and she could hardly wait to get home to set it up. She even called me later to get more info on where to set it up. So far, so good. I let her know in no uncertain terms that she must destroy any house sparrows, their chicks, and their eggs. The sooner she got a Van Ert trap, the better, was my blunt suggestion. After that, she got quiet...

A few days later, in an email, she sadly informed me that she just can't kill a house sparrow. Some day, maybe – but now, she just can't bring herself to do this, despite my exhortations on sparrow control – and my graphic presentation pictures of dead and almost decapitated bluebirds – the result of a male house sparrow invasion. In my reply to her, I mentioned – her being a Wild Ones member – that it is interesting, and disappointing, that you don't think twice about pulling up invasive garlic mustard and buckthorn by the roots and burning it... to make room for native bloodroot or trillium or dogwood. But you can't take out a house sparrow for the sake of a bluebird...

And it got me to thinking... it doesn't stop with the plant world. Working our way up the food chain, we have no use for Asian beetles or emerald ash borers or gypsy moths. But no one sheds a tear when we spray and spray to eliminate these non-native pests. The more we

destroy, the better. In the marine world, we routinely poison thousands and thousands of carp - and if that doesn't do the trick, we net 'em and grind 'em up for fertilizer. After all, they displace our valuable native brook trout, bass, and pike. They gotta go... and again, the more we get rid of, the better! Moving up to the animal world – no different. Introduce a non-native animal to a new country and see what happens. Most often, it isn't pretty. Just ask Australians about rabbits or Hawaiians about snakes. Or ask the Japanese communities like Hokkaido, that thought raccoons were so adorable. For years, 1500 young raccoons were imported each year. But the little ones grew up. Grown up raccoons aren't so adorable. So now they run rampant. By the time the Japanese government stopped these imports, it was too late. With no predator control, they destroy/damage anything in their path! Closer to home, all we have to do is look at our own backyard. If we see a house mouse, or, heaven forbid, a Norway rat – out comes a trap... like NOW!

And of course, I could go on and on. So could you. But somehow, some way, through all of this, the house sparrow too often gets a reprieve, a free pass. Despite the fact that it is undoubtedly the single biggest avian disaster ever, I too often hear that one or the other just can't kill that cute little chirping ball of feathers.

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## Tick Awareness!!

Deer ticks like a warm, humid environment and are found in tall grass, brush, woods and leaf litter. They are most active from March until October.

Serious diseases carried by deer tick: Lyme disease, Anaplasmosis, Babesiosis and Powassan disease.

Reasons to see a physician after tick bite or outdoor activity: rash, fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain.

Removing imbedded tick: use pointed tweezers.

Prevention: Wear light colored clothes, makes it easier to spot ticks. Spray clothing with 20-30% Deet Spray before going out. Check clothing and skin often for ticks. Remove tick immediately.



## Watch Out for Wild Parsnip

Wild parsnip (Poison Parsnip) is one of a few, unique plants that can cause phyto-photo-dermatitis. What this means is that chemicals in the juices of this plant with the help of ultraviolet light can burn your skin. These chemicals are found in the green leaves, stems and fruits of wild parsnip. It is not unusual to run into this invasive plant on bluebird trails throughout Wisconsin. Use caution when checking nest boxes in tall grass fields or roadside ditches. Wild Parsnips can grow 3-5 feet tall and have a spread over 12-18 inches wide. By mid-June it is in full flower. The leaves resemble celery but the plant is in the carrot family.



## INCOME STATEMENT

YTD through: May 24, 2018

REVENUE	ACTUAL YTD	BUDGET YTD	PROPOSED BUDGET 2018
Memberships	4,165	3,625	8,700
Donations	937	1,479	3,550
Material sales	2,091	1,146	2,750
State Convention	1,317	625	1,500
Dividends/Interest	-	44	105
<b>TOTAL REVENUE:</b>	<b>8,510</b>	<b>6,919</b>	<b>16,605</b>
<b>OPERATIONS</b>			
Misc. Comp., Supplies, Meetings, Postage, Workshops, website, etc.	4,990	4,404	10,570
<b>MATERIAL &amp; EQUIP.</b>			
Printing	1,765	3,125	7,500
Promotional Programs	-	417	1,000
Nest Box Access. & Trail Support	270	958	2,300
<b>FINANCIAL</b>			
Fees, Contributions	196	192	460
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES:</b>	<b>7,221</b>	<b>9,096</b>	<b>21,830</b>
<b>NET REVENUE AFTER EXPENSES:</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>(2,177)</b>	<b>(5,225)</b>

## BRAW Financial Report

By Dan Schroeder, Treasurer

Although we anticipated this year may end in the red, we have been working to reduce expenses and seek additional sources of revenue. So far in the year, our efforts are paying off, but the second half of the year is always a bit tougher. So, please consider some additional contributions, regardless of the size!

### BRAW Joins Amazon Smiles!

Amazon has become the largest on-line ordering site in the country. It has also developed a way to support non-profit organizations such as BRAW. If you use Amazon, log into "<http://smiles.amazon.com>" instead of just "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. If you have any questions, contact me (Steve Sample). We thank you.

# Nest Guide to Cavity Nesters

by Patrick Ready/BRAW

## Eastern Bluebird

Fine or coarse grass, pine needles, lined with fine grasses. Eggs are light blue an rarely white.



Wisconsin Bluebird

## Tree Swallow

Similar to bluebirds, grass & straw, lined with feathers when eggs are laid. Eggs are white and elongated.



## Black-Capped Chickadee

Moss, fine grass, lined with animal hair. Chickadees sometimes cover their eggs with the fur when they leave the nest. Eggs are white with fine brown speckles.



## House Wren

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



Wren photos by Jack Bartholmai



## House Sparrow

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



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



Middle: Eggs-white or grey with brown specs



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

## Species Identification of cavity nesters

### Male & female Eastern Bluebird



### Female & male Tree Swallow.



Black-capped Chickadee, sexes similar.

House Wren, sexes similar.



All photos by Pat Ready

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# BRAW Membership/Renewal Information

## Wisconsin Bluebird Subscription and BRAW, Inc. Membership

Yes! I would like to **renew my membership** 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:

Subscription/Membership contribution:

- \$20 individual or Family Annual
- \$25 Contributing Annual
- \$100 Corporate Annual
- \$300 Life Membership

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

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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.  
Mike Ray  
1120 N. Pleasant View Rd. Apt 204  
Middleton, WI 53562

You can also use PayPal or a credit card to renew your membership or make a contribution on the the BRAW website at [www.braw.org](http://www.braw.org)

If you join during the year you will be on a quarterly membership and *will not* receive back issues.

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**WSO Liaison: Jennifer Wenzel**, [miloloki@wi.rr.com](mailto:miloloki@wi.rr.com), 262-488-8077





compass to face the box Easterly. Having another set of hands to hold the step ladder steady, put the box on the pole, and hold it in place while I tightened the clamp screws was great.



During the process we had a chance to talk about helping cavity dwellers find a home and how to use the viewing door. Just seeing the newly erected bluebird houses gave us joy. Now, I am getting excited reports about which houses are occupied, plus photos like the one above taken by Jim and Sarah Lampman.

The landowners are embracing the experience, and I am thrilled with the chance to spread the joy of helping our feathered friends.



## Spreading the Joy

By Gene Kroupa

A year ago I put up my first bluebird house. I got much delight from watching a bluebird pair settle in and fledge four offspring. That experience got me to thinking about how I could share that joy.

As a result, I decided to ask permission from rural landowner friends to erect houses on their properties. All four I asked, agreed to the project using 12 houses supplied by BRAW.

I purchased the 3/4-inch conduit, clamps and screws for the supporting poles. Our home's kitchen countertop proved to be the perfect place to loosely attach the hardware. An aluminum nail was added to keep the box from sliding down the pole if the two clamps should come loose.

When I arrived at the landowner's place, all we needed do was find the "ideal" locations. We picked open field areas that were near trees.

After driving the seven-foot pole a foot deep, I used a

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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

Patrick Ready - President

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**2017 Trail  
Data**  
See page 3

### Great Crested Flycatcher is in The House

By Rick Pertile, Sawyer County

Every spring, many of us are busy cleaning out our bluebird houses in preparation for nesting pairs soon to arrive. We initially put them out in specific habitat with hope to attract the intended species. However, as we all know too well, sometimes we can and do attract other species, some wanted and



others not. Most of the time we can tell the non-targeted species by the type of nest materials we find when we do our spring cleaning. Some nests are very obvious – stick nests of the house wren, feathered nests of tree swallows, moss nest of chickadees and of course the messy nest of the house sparrow which can contain anything from feathers and string to cellophane paper. However some nests may leave us scratching our heads wondering just who the last occupants were.

One species that may occupy our houses provided the entrance hole has been somewhat enlarged perhaps by woodpeckers, is the Great Crested flycatcher. These medium sized flycatchers about 7-8 inches long, can and sometimes will use bluebird houses with an entrance hole at least 1.75 inches around. If your nest material contains dried oak leaves, rootlets, white pine needles, animal fur and the presence of shed snake skins, your occupant was most certainly this bird.

Although it may not be your intended species, this bird

should be a welcomed tenant and is very fun to watch. Their typical call is unmistakable and they are more often first heard than seen since they tend to spend their time high up in the canopy of trees. Their preferred habitat seems to be deciduous forests with clearings including along lake shores and ponds.

Typically these birds can be enticed to use nest boxes by putting them up in suitable habit and especially if other cavities or abandoned flicker or pileated woodpecker holes are scarce. Nest box plans for this species can vary, but typically a box with a 5x6 or 6x6 inch floor seems to be preferred from my personal experience. The entrance hole should be 1.75- 2 inches round and be 6-8 inches from the floor. The house should be placed from 8-15 feet high on a tree or pole facing the clearing or lakeshore. Poles may sometimes work best with predator guards to avoid competition with squirrels or marauding raccoons. In the Midwest, houses should be up by early May as the birds tend to arrive by the second or third week to establish nesting territories.

With a little luck, this bird can and will give you hours of enjoyment watching it pursue insects, as well as tend to the nest and young. You'll also feel good knowing you just helped our only cavity nesting flycatcher that is dependent on suitable nest sites, which unfortunately continue to diminish due to logging and housing development.

