

Spring 2018  
Vol. 33, No. 1



# 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

## Join Us for the 2018 Annual Convention!

see page 2



Cold Day in December - Evelina Tsoncheva

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# BRAW Annual Convention

## Convention Presenters

**Register today!!**



- **Steve Betchkal: *Birding By Ear*** - Tweet. Chirp. Warble. Caw. Ornithologist Steve Betchkal is fluent in bird. You can be too -- with a little help from mnemonics. Parlez vous chickadee?



- **Timber Wolves Information Network: *Wisconsin Wolves*** - I became involved with wolves in the mid-90's when they began re-colonizing Wisconsin's Central Forest Region - first by just reporting tracks and sign to wolf biologist Richard Thiel, and then by joining the DNR's Volunteer Carnivore Tracker program in 2001. I was asked to become a Regional Coordinator for the program after a couple of years, and eventually I was named Central Forest Coordinator. In that role I direct approximately 30 citizen and agency trackers as they conduct winter carnivore track surveys. In early summer I work with the Central Forest radio collaring team, as we attempt to capture and collar at least one wolf in 20% of the local packs. After that activity wraps up at the end of June, I conduct howl surveys across the southern half of the region for the remainder of the summer, to develop a rough assessment of pup production. I'm also currently serving as an adviser for a Carthage College howl identification study, and I'm assisting in the collection of wolf DNA samples for a Central Michigan University study.

These field experiences are a tremendous asset in my role as a (TWIN) educator, along with many years of being mentored by a number of wolf biologists with whom I've been able to work.

**Directions: From Eau Claire take Hwy 12 east to Fall Creek. Take Hwy K north from Fall Creek to Beaver Creek Reserve.**



# BRAW Annual Convention

## Beaver Creek Reserve, April 7, 2018

The BRAW Annual Convention will be held on Saturday, April 7, 2018 at Beaver Creek Reserve near Fall Creek, WI

### Conference fees:

\$6.00: Registration without lunch per person

\$12.00: Includes registration & lunch per person

**Lunch:** choice of ham & cheese or turkey & cheese on whole wheat or white bread (indicate preference); potato salad, dessert bar – cost \$12 prepaid. If registering for more than one person, please indicate food choice for each person. Vegetarian available upon request.

Registration form with lunch choices below.

**Registration is paid in advance.** Please include name and address of each person registering.



### SILENT AUCTION

Are you creative with sewing, baking or other crafts? Use your imagination for the silent auction. It doesn't need to be bluebird related.

Help support BRAW with your donation or plan to buy an item and support BRAW bluebird trail development.

### Program for 2018 BRAW Annual Convention

8:30-9:30 Registration

9:30-9:45 Welcome: President Pat Ready;  
Treasurer's Report: Dan Schroeder

9:45- 10:15 - BRAW Awards

10:15-10:45 2017 Season: Steve Falon, Coordinator of Data Collection

10:45-11:00 Break & Social time

11:00-12:00 *Birding by Ear* – Steve Betchkal

12:00-1:00 Lunch (**Pre-paid only**)

1:00-1:15 Silent Auction winners: (Auction to be over at 1 p.m.)

1:15-2:15: *Wisconsin Wolves* by Ray Leonard

2:15 - 3:00 Ask the Bluebird Experts - Q&A panel discussion

### ANNUAL CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

Please indicate the number of lunches for your party at \$12 each: \_\_\_\_\_. **Include check for full amount.**

\_\_\_ Ham \_\_\_ Turkey

\_\_\_ white bread \_\_\_ wheat bread \_\_\_ Gluten Free bread

\_\_\_ Vegetarian meal

\_\_\_ registration only (\$6) no lunch

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Return form **with payment by March 30** to:

Pat Ready  
815 Sky Ridge Dr.  
Madison, WI 53719

## A Word from the Prez

Spring is just around the corner! Soon the Blues will be back. Make sure your nest boxes are ready for them when they arrive.

BRAW volunteers just finished doing the WHA Garden Expo in Madison. We gave 2 presentations on attracting bluebirds and greeted many attendees at our double booth. We sold 40 nest boxes, many Van Ert Sparrow traps and other items.

Thanks to Mike Helgren for overseeing this event again. Also thanks to these volunteers that worked at the booth: Ellen Helgren, Steve Sample, Dave Misterek, Gordon Weber, Susie Sample, Pam Duszynski, Dave Lucey, Steve Fallon, Marianne Jensen, Bill & Donna Stehling, Brad Zinda, Katie Kozak, Mary Sobol, Rod Courtier, Dan Schroeder, Harv Kucaba and Will Vail. The Blues thank you as well!

While working at the booth at the Expo a man came up and asked "Why can't we make a nest box just for Bluebirds?" Well we all know the entrance hole size allows for other species to enter the box so we can't design an exclusive bluebird box. Not yet anyway. Last fall I read an article in the local paper about middle school kids in the Cross Plains/Middleton schools that were studying bluebirds. They learned that the English House Sparrow was the main problem for bluebirds wanting to use a nest box. The kids have decided to tackle the problem head on. They are



trying to develop a "facial recognition" type software that would see the bird when it landed at the entrance hole. The software connected to an in-box camera and would see if the bird was a House Sparrow, then trigger a device to block the entrance hole. If a bluebird landed at the entrance the software would allow it in. Now this could change monitoring in the future big time!!!

The BRAW Annual Convention is coming up in April and will be in the northwest part of the state. See the 2 previous pages for all the information. I hope we can have a good turn out and see many of you there. It is always great to see members and catch up on what is going on in their area of the state. Some may wonder why I have Wisconsin Wolves on the program? Well wolves are cavity nesters . . . they live in a den/cavity under ground!! I think it will be very interesting to learn about this species that was once extirpated from our state. Those of us that enjoy bird watching know how important it is to hear birds singing to know where they are so we can see them. It can be fun and also frustrating so Steve Betchkal's talk should be most informative.

One last thing. We need women on the board of directors! Claire is the lone female director. Female members please consider joining her/us. We don't bite! Let me know. I'll get you more information.

Happy Trails!

Patrick Ready  
BRAW President



Garden Expo  
2018 held in  
Madison  
February 9-11.



# Just What Were We Thinking?????

By Bob Tamm

Waiting for Bluebird Season to begin, I often go into my library and peruse what has become a very large collection of old birds/birding books - all written in the 1800s to the very early 1900s. I cannot help but be amazed at what I read... things our forefathers did that ran the gamut of emotions! To be sure... some good things are recorded. But - too often - there were events that would be outrageous if done in today's society. Yet, if we go back a hundred or more years - the actions of so-called ornithologists and experts back then were perfectly acceptable - even promoted and encouraged.

I have enough information from my collection to go on and on and on! And I perhaps will give you more tidbits of information in future issues. But I can almost guarantee that when reading about these events and happenings, they will evoke a combination of shock, sadness, disgust, confusion, and, in some instances.... a good laugh! There are some real head-scratchers buried in the annals of our bird history! In all cases however, I believe you will wind up asking yourself at the end... JUST WHAT WERE WE THINKING???

For starters, let me tell you about a rare book I purchased many years ago, written by a man named William Earl Dodge Scott. Mr. Scott was a Harvard graduate who studied under scientist Louis Agassiz - and became a famed ornithologist who ultimately was named the very first Curator of the Department of Ornithology at a budding new university - none other than Princeton University in New Jersey.

The book he wrote - an autobiography of his life - is called "The Story of a Bird Lover". A fascinating book in so many ways - but my purpose is not to give book reviews - but rather to reveal some of his personal thoughts and actions as brought forth in his book, published in 1903...

The setting: It is the year 1879, and Mr. Scott has arrived in Florida for his second visit. He has come there with his entourage to "collect" hundreds of bird specimens to take back to Princeton U., where only a couple

years ago he was named Princeton University Museum Curator. (One of his main jobs was to upgrade a very poorly kept collection of birds.) Mr. Scott states that his second visit is nowhere near how it was in his first visit (1875). Owing to the slaughter of birds by uncontrolled hunting, including the infamous plume-hunters, Mr. Scott tells us that what birds are left have vanished into the wilds to avoid the wanton bird destruction. But he is there to bring back many specimens, and he will stop at nothing to fulfill that task!

In describing his adventures in the "wilds" of Florida (after all, this IS 1879!) he laments the following - which I give to you verbatim from his book - Chapter entitled "FLORIDA: THE GULF COAST" page 160.

*"The poor whites of this region presented many curious and unaccountable phases of ignorance. Shortly after my arrival I offered a stipulated price for certain birds such as the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, and at first I obtained some specimens, but later such people as I could get to do this sort of thing for me refused, or excused themselves from undertaking it; generally the latter. One day one of them, more frank than the rest, told me that it had become common gossip that I was not paying a fair market price for birds, especially the Ivory-Bills; that I took them North and sold the ivory of which the bill was composed for fabulous prices, and was simply playing on the credulity of the people whom I paid a small price for obtaining them."*

Yep.... The same Ivory-Bills many of us today would travel halfway around the world to see...except that will never happen because, sadly, they're long gone.

Read on -

In an earlier chapter "FIRST PROFESSIONAL WORK" Mr. Scott tells us that one of the earliest jobs he got was working for a well-known taxidermist named John Wallace. Scott had become quite good at skinning and stuffing birds - and was hired by Mr. Wallace to work at his shop, located in Brooklyn, N.Y. The following is from p. 73, again, verbatim:

*"In connection with my labor at John Wallace's, a word with regard to the*

*attitude of the public toward the shooting of song-birds in those days seems essential. This was in the winter of 1874 and 1875. During the three months I spent in this shop my time was occupied almost exclusively in skinning native songbirds for millinery purposes. Early every morning the local gunners from Long Island, New Jersey, and the environs of New York would appear at the shop with the previous day's bag of birds. Nothing larger than a wood-thrush was accepted. About three hundred and fifty or four hundred birds were received on an average each day. These were chiefly the following species: song sparrows, white-throated sparrows, fox sparrows, swamp sparrows, various kinds of warblers, titmice, nuthatches, wrens, the smaller blackbirds, swallows, and thrushes. Bluebirds and cedar-birds were considered by far the most desirable, there being a great demand for them at the time for ladies' hats. Something like seven or eight cents apiece were paid for these birds, so the man who killed his forty or fifty per day made good wages."*

Really.... What WERE we thinking???

Stay tuned...

## BRAW welcomes these new and returning members

William Cary  
Dennis Krumenauer  
Hannah Stuckey  
Jennifer Dietsche  
William Albano  
Nate Straight  
Jack Arnston  
Daniel Durmick  
Pam Schmid  
Gordon Telford (from the Expo)  
Jill Gaskel

### Donors 100\$ or more:

Carolyn Berg 200\$  
Donald Persons 100\$  
Peter Livingston 100\$  
Ray Mathey \$300 memorial for his wife, Beverly Mathey.

### Give a Gift Subscription!

Membership to BRAW makes a wonderful gift for your Bluebird friends. Or consider a gift for your local library or school.

# Spring 2018 County Coordinator Report

By Carol McDaniel

I have had some reports of people seeing bluebirds in the southwest part of the state this winter. Gratiot, where I live, has had two January thaws and melted the relatively light snows. Sometime in mid to late February, we all need to get out on our trails and check to see that the boxes are ready for the bluebirds' return. Make contacts with the other bluebirders in your area and give them that little extra nudging. Encourage them to keep records and send in the results at the end of the season. They can visit the BRAW web site for more information.

Ellen Lafouge is stepping down as Ozaukee County as CC. She is moving out of state and Mary Holleback is taking Ozaukee over. Thanks Mary! You can reach her at [mholleback@gmail.com](mailto:mholleback@gmail.com)

Several CCs are having workshops or are presenting at a seminar this spring. You can read about them below. Some are using the PowerPoint program that I put together titled, "Bluebirding in Wisconsin along the Bluebird Trail". Contact me and I can email or mail a copy of the program to you. It can be changed to suit your needs, too. Putting on a workshop is critical for getting the bluebirders fired up about installing and checking boxes. Taking folks on a bluebird trail hike is another way to introduce people to bluebirds. Most of us got our start in bluebirding when we saw our first bluebird.

The list of County Coordinators is in this issue. These folks need a big pat on the back! There is also a list of counties below that do not have CCs. If you are interested in taking one of those counties, let me know. Hope to see you at the BRAW Convention on April 7.

## A list of counties that do not have coordinators:

Barron, Bayfield, Buffalo, Calumet, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Forest, Iron, Jefferson, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Manitowoc, Marquette, Menominee, Oneida, Price, Pepin, Polk, Richland, Rusk, Taylor, Vernon, Walworth, Washburn, Waushara,

Here are the reports from CCs. Thanks to all of you!



**Patrick Ready, Dane County:** This fall I was contacted by the director of the Welty Nature Center near Beloit with a request for a bluebird trail there. I went down in November and we scouted out likely places for boxes to attract bluebirds. She is working with a scout troop to build 12 NABS-style boxes. I plan to give my Attracting Bluebirds talk there in March and get the trail set up in April. BRAW was at the Garden Expo in Madison Feb 9-11 and we gave 2 bluebird presentations in the seminar rooms and also talked blues with many attendees at our booth. This spring I will also be installing a new trail at The Oaks Golf Course near Marshall. I talked with the owner last fall and he is looking forward to having a trail there. Recently I was contacted by A Madison Eagle Scout that wants to put in 50 nest boxes in a Dane County park where I already have a trail. I am working to redirect his effort to other areas where nest boxes can go. Above is one of three bluebirds I saw in SW Wisconsin one cold day in January.

## Mary Holleback, Washington

**County:** Riveredge is having a workshop on March 17th from 1:00-2:30. Details can be found on the website - [riveredgenaturecenter.org](http://riveredgenaturecenter.org). Riveredge has been participating in the Christmas Bird Count since 1969. Bluebirds have been reported in 13 of those 48 years. Oddly enough no bluebirds were found from 1969 through 1999. Then 141 were found from 2000 to 2014. None have been seen since then on the count. No apparent explanation other than just plain luck.

## Stan Rosenstiel, Kenosha County:

We will be putting up a BB trail for the Seno Kenosha/Racine Land Trust

Conservancy in the Spring. 4 boxes were put up recently at the Myers Park restoration project. I will be putting up a small trail and give a Bluebird talk this Spring at the Eco Justice Center in Caledonia. Hopefully we can work out something with the adjoining Cliffside Park to expand it there. From Kenosha and Racine Rick Fare is scheduled to give this presentation on April 14.

## Ruthann Meiers, Shawano County:

We are having a bluebird presentation at the Navarino Nature Center on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Gene Birr, Oconto County:** (Gene is reporting for Oconto and Brown Counties) In Brown County, the activities of two of our leading monitors have been reported to me. Melissa McNeil has trails in the Howard and Suamico areas that produced greatly improved results from last year. She reports that 133 bluebirds were fledged from 32 of her 39 nest boxes, (29 more bluebirds than last season), which was a 28% increase that resulted in 3.41 bluebirds per nest box, an 82% occupancy rate, and only a 15% mortality rate. These are all outstanding numbers in Northeast Wisconsin that are very likely the result of her efforts to reduce predation by equipping nearly all her nest boxes with stove-pipe baffles and Noel Guards last year. She has also replaced old Peterson boxes with NABS boxes and relocated and replaced some on new conduit poles.

Barb Allen, in addition to the nearly 150 boxes she already monitors in four counties, took it upon herself to take over a long-abandoned trail along the highway corridor near UW-GB, on the far east side of Green Bay last fall. She removed nearly 30 old birdhouses that had been attached to highway frontage fencing that were the result apparently of a university group research project that was no longer being monitored. These boxes were mostly occupied by Tree Swallows or taken over by House Sparrows. Using conduit and NABS boxes supplied by the County Coordinators, Barb has entirely altered that trail by relocating boxes and reducing their number to about 20, in an area which appears to be suitable bluebird habitat near the university. In mid-October, Barb and

I also established a 27 box trail on the beautiful oak-lined grounds of the Twin Oaks Golf Course in a rural area five miles east of Green Bay, which she will monitor next year. Largely due to the efforts of these two monitors the number of nest boxes and bluebirds fledged continues to improve in Brown County.

In Oconto County most monitors reported fewer bluebirds and swallows fledged this year while wren numbers were up. The cold and rainy weather in May and June limited the availability of insects which appears to have caused the starvation death of many birds, especially Tree Swallows. I experienced my greatest mortality of swallows in 10 years of monitoring when 39% of my eggs and chicks did not survive.

The Spring Convention of BRAW is approaching in early April at the Beaver Creek Reserve near Eau Claire. While attending there I will make available Noel Guards and I will have chickadee hole reducers and oval hole replacements which can be used to repair NABS nest boxes. Several NE WI monitors are experimenting with an open-hole roof with a clear plastic cover, to test whether these will deter House Sparrows from nesting because the nesting cavity is brighter. I will have several of those available for any of you who may want to test out this idea as well. I look forward to seeing our fellow bluebird enthusiasts there this spring.

**Jack Bartholomai, Dodge County:** I will be doing a presentation on cavity nesting owls at 12:00 pm at the 2018 Nest Box Seminar on March 3 at the Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center. My photo illustrated presentation will include a brief description of Saw-whet, Screech and Barred owls. Emphasis will be on the nesting and breeding activities of these cavity nesting owls, and how we can preserve or provide essential habitat for them. Other presentations during the day (8:30-1:00) include bluebirds and chickadees. Bluebird houses will be on hand for sale.

**Charlotte Lukes, Door County:** I will present a bluebird monitoring program for participants in the annual Ridges Sanctuary bluebird nest box

building workshop. The event will be held on Saturday, March 17<sup>th</sup> from 10 am to noon in the Cook-Fuller Center at 8166 Highway 57, Baileys Harbor, WI. The cost for the workshop is \$10 for members of The Ridges Sanctuary, \$13 for general public and \$5 for children under age 18. Handouts will be available to help understand what bluebirds need and the proper locations to place nest boxes. Tools and materials for one box will be provided. Additional kits are available for \$5. Call The Ridges at 920-839-2802 for more information and to register.

I will do another bluebird nesting program on Sunday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm in the Nature Center at Newport State Park in far northeastern Door County. The program is free, but a vehicle entrance sticker will be necessary to attend.

**Carol McDaniel, Lafayette and Grant Counties:** 16 monitors sent in trail reports to me during the 2017 season from 203 boxes. Although the monitors in our area lost many nestlings this past summer, we still had a good fledging number of 631. Now, if I can just get all of them to send in their reports to BRAW! I am planning to expand the trail on my property this spring. Since moving here in 2016, I have had great results with bluebirds on this four box trail. There are enough acres to accommodate several more boxes. I keep in close contact with the bluebirders in Lafayette County and will be reaching out to Grant County as well. On March 21, I will be at the Bluebird Nest Nature Center in Darlington talking about bluebirds. The LCBS is planning a bluebird trail hike sometime in June. On April 14, the Lafayette County Bluebird Society will be holding its Spring Meeting. Guest speakers are from the Hoo Haven Rehab Center. For more about it, see the announcement in this copy of WB.

**Kathleen Dreikosen, Green County:** One of the things I do to bring awareness of the Eastern Bluebird in our community is to donate! Each year our Monroe Arts Center, or MAC for short, holds their annual Holiday Silent Auction in November. This auction raises funds that support the arts

in Monroe. The donations support the many wonderful programs such as musical talents, art gallery shows, children's programs, workshops, etc. Each year I donate a NABS cedar bluebird house made by a carpenter in our community. The house comes with the conduit and hardware for mounting. I also include a year's subscription to Wisconsin Bluebird, advice on the placement of their house and an opportunity to accompany me on one of my weekly monitoring trips at the Monroe Country Club. On the tour they will learn about bluebirds, identifying nests, eggs, and see the chicks and adults. I also promote the protection of the other cavity nesting birds that may inhabit the houses. The golf course is a great place to promote our bluebirds. Many golfers have gotten to know me as the "bluebird lady" and will often stop and talk and ask questions regarding the birds. This year I also donated a NABS house to our new Hospice House. I will monitor this house along with my other trail in rural Monroe. I hope seeing the bluebirds will bring joy to the residents and their families and visitors.

**Darrel Eberhardt, Jackson County:**



**Facing the Real World**  
I found this young bluebird last summer when I was checking my bluebird trail. I guess you could call him a late nester. He did not fledge with his brothers and sisters. Perhaps, he did not want to go into the real world. At first, I thought there was something wrong with him. He was standing, so there was nothing wrong with his legs. His wings looked okay. As I moved from left to right, his head moved with me, so there was nothing wrong with his eyes. I slowly closed the nest box door, went to the car, got a camera, and took this picture. Two days later, I went to see how he was doing. He was gone! Apparently, he felt that the real world was not that bad.

*continued next page . . .*

(continued from page 7)

I will be presenting a bluebird program using the PowerPoint titled *Bluebirding in Wisconsin Along the Bluebird Trail* at the Eleva Strum High School in late February or early March.

**Kent Hall, Portage, Waupaca, Monroe, Wood Counties:** Awaiting bluebird migrants--We have 1,250 boxes in place for this season. Am putting in a 5-box trail around Marathon Elementary School for 54 3rd graders.

**Lowell Peterson, St. Croix County:** I have made contact with our local Fish and Wildlife Office about conducting a presentation about cavity nesting birds. Also, I have talked to our local Boy Scouts about having a session and expect to hear from them soon. I am on BRAW's School and Outreach Committee and am making plans for conducting sessions around this area. It is a challenge to come up with a teacher who will commit to being a leader with the students to monitor the nest boxes.

**Don Pritzl, Kewaunee County:** I will be giving a bluebird presentation at the Algoma Celebration on April 7. As I sit here today (January 29), the temperature is slowly falling toward zero and I can't wait for spring to come and the return of the bluebirds. Someone told me that they had a bluebird on their feeder this week. I have never seen one during the winter. Last season, my 61 boxes fledged 197 Eastern Bluebirds, 113 Tree Swallows, and 15-20 wrens. I have been putting up and monitoring boxes since 1992. Since then, I have fledged 3600 bluebirds and other cavity nesters.

## County Coordinator List

By Carol McDaniel

Thanks to all these Bluebirders that volunteer to be their County Coordinator and help spread the word about Bluebird conservation. Here is the current list for 2018.

County	Coordinator	Phone	Email
Adams	Beyers, Myron	608-586-4833	
Ashland	Becker, Rich & Carol	715-274-3200	richfstop@gmail.com
Brown	Mayer, Steve	920-434-9885	mayersj511@aol.com
Chippewa	Anderson, Debbie	715-382-4639	jradma@centurytel.net
Columbia	Foote-Martin, Sue	608-333-9645	goosep@chorus.net
Dane	Ready, Pat	608-239-0791	birdsready@gmail.com
Dodge	Bartholmai, Jack	920-887-1505	jack@bartholmai.com
Door	Lukes, Charlotte	920-823-2478	Rnclukes@mwwb.net
Douglas	Bergsten, Charles	715-364-2679	charles477@centurytel.net
Eau Claire	Gundry, Rita	715-579-5523	gundryrk@uwec.edu
Florence	Kowalski, Ed	715-732-8803	n/a
Fond du Lac	Memuna Khan	920-312-8142	khanm@ripon.edu
Grant	McDaniel, Carol	608-922-2473	cjmcd_98@yahoo.com
Green	Dreikosen, Kathleen	608-325-5562	kddd@tds.net
Green Lake	Marwitz, David	920-291-6001	dfmarwitz@centurytel.net
Iowa	Moody, Dale & Doris	608-846-5024	drydog93@yahoo.com
Jackson	Eberhardt, Darrell	715-963-4775	n/a
Kenosha	Rosenstiel, Stan	n/a	mrstanmr@yahoo.com
Kewaunee	Pritzl, Don	920-845-2436	n/a
Lacrosse	Marking, Leif	608-779-1794	lcmarking@gmail.com
Lafayette	McDaniel, Carol	608-922-2473	cjmcd_98@yahoo.com
Marathon	Romanak, Claire	715-257-1905	ribriver2@wildblue.net
Marinette	Kowalski, Ed	715-732-8803	n/a
Milwaukee	Tamm, Bob	262-679-2068	bjtamm@yahoo.com
Monroe	Hall, Kent	715-344-8081	kentsue@charter.net
Oconto	Birr, Gene	920-826-7552	gbbird22@gmail.com
Outagamie	Mayer, Steve	920-434-9885	mayersj511@aol.com
Ozaukee	Holleback, Mary	262-335-9843	mholleback@gmail.com
Pierce	Beix, Jim	715-425-6981	jbeix@dishup.us
Portage	Hall, Kent	715-344-8081	kentsue@charter.net
Racine	Rosenstiel,	n/a	mrstanmr@yahoo.com
Rock	Courtier, Rod	608-882-5859	racourtier@charter.net
Sauk	Stehling, Donna and Bill	608-643-0824	donnamstehling@gmail.com
Sawyer	Chambers, Diane	715-699-0356	zippydi@centurytel.net
Shawano	Meiers, Ruthann	715-758-2463	alstaxidermy@granitewave.com
Sheboygan	Curtis, Lee	920-838-2193	n/a
St. Croix	Peterson, Lowell	715-247-3243	n/a
Trempealeau	Craig, Fred	608-783-2225	266marycraig@gmail.com
Vilas	Butzer, Bob	715-356-2215	n/a
Washington	Holleback, Mary	262-335-9843	mholleback@gmail.com
Waukesha	Tamm, Bob	262-679-2068	bjtamm@yahoo.com
Waupaca	Hall, Kent	715-344-8081	kentsue@charter.net
Winnebago	Misterek, Dave	920-233-6770	dmisterek47@gmail.com
Wood	Hall, Kent	715-344-8081	kentsue@charter.net

## Bluebird and Nature Gift Giving Ideas

By Richard Becker, Ashland County Coordinator

There are a variety of holidays and special events during that year that call for gift giving. Birthdays, graduations, Valentine's Day, anniversaries, Father's Day, and Mother's Day are a few that come to mind. Here are some bluebird and nature related gift giving ideas.

A set of binoculars is always a wonderful gift for a nature enthusiast, especially a birder. The thing to remember with this gift is to let the recipient pick their own. If two of you are going to use the binoculars than go together and find a nice pair that fits you both.

Think clothes. If the person you are buying for loves nature, they will be spending time outdoors. There are so many different ways to go with this idea. Always go for layers. When you are out in the woods or fields during any season the weather can change. Too warm take a little off, too cold put another layer on. Bugs can also add to the nature experience, so you might want to think bug suit, or possibly one of those new bug shirts. I personally have never used one of the bug shirts, but have heard good things about them. A nice lightweight brimmed hat is also a great addition to a nature lover's wardrobe.

A field guide is always a great gift and you can find one that covers just about any subject, from birds, to trees, to insects. If you want a field guide that is basic but well written and illustrated turn to Stan Tekeila. Stan has several different guides on the market and each is very good. As far as birding goes, his guide *Birds of Wisconsin* is very good. This is a guide that you can share with your children, as it has great pictures and good information on each bird.

Bird feeders are a great addition to any backyard. There are not only great ones that you can purchase, but also plans for you to build one. A gift that you build has a special touch to it; also building a feeder gives you a chance to "take a child's hand" and share your knowledge with them.

If the birder on your list already has

a number of feeders, then a nice bag of sunflower seeds would be a fine gift. Thistle seed and suet will help round out this gift.

What gift can you give someone that will last all year? This gift is a book. I just received a copy of a new book and I will show you what I mean. My wife, Carol, and I have always been partial to the Eastern Bluebird. When we lived in Illinois we had several bluebird trails located on golf courses and in the fields of a local forest preserve. These trails gave us an opportunity to learn about this wonderful bird, but also just to get outside.

Books make wonderful gifts. I read and recommend the book: *The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird*, by Dean Rust. How can we make this book last us through all of the seasons? First of all I would ask each of you to find a young child to read this book with. This book is filled with many wonderful pictures of the bluebirds making them a great sharing experience. Take the time to page through the book and look at all of the different pictures and talk about them with your child.

As you enter into the world of bluebirds in this book, you will first figure out where they live. This can bring up the discussion of how different birds choose what type of habitat they live in. Once you have figured this out you can decide if they would live and nest near you.

The next question is: where do they build their nests? At this point you can determine that they nest in a cavity like a birdhouse and you can build one. There are lots of different choices; none of which are very hard. Here starts the late winter project of building a birdhouse. During the construction you can teach your young assistant how to use different tools safely. This knowledge can last them a lifetime.

Early spring and your birdhouse or houses are ready to go. Time to head out to find a place to put up this house. Dean Rust's book will have taught you the best location.

From spring through early fall you will have the opportunity to share the life cycle of this beautiful bird. Once a nest is established you can check it on a weekly basis to follow the bird from building the nest, to laying the

eggs, to watching the young grow and fledge. This is a subject you could just talk about, but it is so much better to see it in person. The greatest part of this whole project is you still have a child's hand in yours.

That should about cover all the seasons, but something is missing... the bugs! Now we are not just talking about any bugs, we are talking about mealworms. Bluebirds love mealworms and children love bugs, so why not raise your own? There is a chapter on raising bugs which I found very interesting. You can share the wealth of this bug with most of the birds in your neighborhood. I say, "go for it!"

So there you have it, a year-long project. This, to me, is a perfect gift... sharing nature with a child. It doesn't end there either, next winter you can build a few more houses and share them with friends.

"Take a child's hand"...share the wonders of nature....Start a Bluebird trail....

C. Becker

### Nestbox Seminar Saturday, March 3 at the Horicon Marsh Education & Visitor Center.

The seminar schedule is as follows:

9 a.m.: Eastern bluebirds presented by Steve Sample, vice president of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin.

10 a.m.: Wood ducks presented by Jeff Bahls, president of the Horicon Marsh Bird Club.

11 a.m.: Black-capped chickadees presented by Steve Sample, vice president of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin.

Noon: Cavity-nesting owls presented by Jack Bartholmai. This photo-illustrated presentation will cover saw-whet, screech and barred owls. This is a free event and all ages are welcome. For more information, call 920-387-7893. Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center is located at N7725, Hwy. 28 between the towns of Horicon and Mayville on Hwy. 28. Please use the lower entrance.

# 2017 Production of Eastern Bluebirds in Monitored Houses

By  
 Leif L. Marking, Project Manager  
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 Onalaska, Wisconsin 54650  
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 608- 779-1794

Steven L Anderson, Project Assistant  
 1014 Canary Ln  
 Onalaska, Wisconsin 54650  
 stevea815@gmail.com

**Introduction:** Bluebirds are cavity-nesting songbirds that are unable to create their own nesting cavities. Natural cavity availability declined significantly when non-native House Sparrows and European Starlings were introduced to this country over 150 years ago. They are victorious competitors for nest cavities and vicious predators of bluebird eggs and young. However, bluebird populations have been increasing since the birth of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) in 1978 followed by many state chapters such as the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW). Our Brice Prairie Conservation Association (BPCA) members have recorded our bluebird production activities since 1992 and annually reported the numbers to the above organizations. Technical information and instructions for producing bluebirds are available from websites of NABS ([www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org)), BRAW ([www.BRAW.org](http://www.BRAW.org)), and BPCA ([www.briceprairieconservation.org](http://www.briceprairieconservation.org)). The purpose of this report is to

## Consolidated Nest Box Summary 2017 Leif Marking Bluebird Associates

Associate's Name	Nest Boxes	Bluebirds Fledged	Bluebird Production Rate	Other Species Fledged			Total Other Species	Total Birds Fledged	Overall Production Rate
				TS	CH	HW			
Jan and Jim Brady	6	24	4.00	10			10	34	5.67
Louis Benchina	25	62	2.48				0	62	2.48
Harry & Ellen Caulum	25	75	3.00				0	75	3.00
Verdel Dawson	14	75	5.36				0	75	5.36
Ron Parker	1	7	7.00				0	7	7.00
Morgan Jostad	12	36	3.00			6	6	42	3.50
Tim Knudson	10	34	3.49	18			18	52	5.20
Stephanie Lubinsky	14	42	3.00				0	42	3.00
John & Louise Leary	9	19	2.11	3			3	22	2.44
Fred Schaldach	13	26	2.00			10	10	36	2.77
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>3.47</b>

Species Key: TS - Tree Swallow, CH - Chickadee, HW - House Wren

summarize the numbers of bluebirds produced by club members this year, recognize increases or decreases over previous years, identify problems that influenced production, and evaluate procedures to increase future production.

**Procedures:** We have selected the NABS-style house to promote bluebird production because the design is practical, they are easy to construct, maintain, and clean, and bluebirds readily occupy them. These cedar houses are mounted on 7-foot steel T-type fence posts that are covered with a 5 ft section of 1-1/2" PVC pipe treated with car wax for mammalian predator control. The houses are usually placed 200 yards or more apart to respect the territorial nature of bluebirds and to encourage maximum production of bluebirds. New houses are built with convertible air vents, so the vents can be closed on site to reduce mortality of eggs and young during sustained cold spells in early nesting and to avoid black fly mortality. Site and habitat selection favors bluebird ecology with large, open, grazed or mowed areas where bluebirds can forage for ground insects. House Sparrow competition

was diminished appreciably by avoiding active farm and livestock feeding operations. Houses were placed at least 200 feet from woods and thickets to minimize House Wren competition. Weekly observations were recorded in notebooks of choice, and those results were transferred to spreadsheets for calculations, evaluations, and presentations. These spreadsheets accumulate numbers of eggs, numbers hatched, and count of bluebirds and other cavity-nesting songbirds fledged. Finally, the numbers are consolidated for each member's totals as well as individual and total production rates for all club members and bluebird associates.

**Results and Discussion:** We monitored 470 bluebird boxes this year, 138 fewer than last year. Those boxes produced 1,927 bluebird fledglings, a decrease of 633 compared to the previous year. Our bluebird production rate also decreased this year (4.10 fledglings per box), primarily due to the late spring season that delayed nesting activity and discouraged third nesting later in the year. Cold temperatures in early spring interfered with first nesting that resulted in poor hatch rates and nestling mortality. This delay offered competitive House Sparrows, Tree Swallows, and wrens opportunities to dominate boxes normally used by bluebirds. Some nestling mortality was due to Black Fly gnat infestations. A dilute solution of Permethrin spray was used with good success to combat the black flies.

We also produced a total of 179 Tree Swallows, 33 Black Capped Chickadees and 163 House Wrens. These cavity nesting species readily occupy

### Brice Prairie Conservation Association – Individuals

Monitor's Name	Nest Boxes	Bluebirds Fledged	Bluebird Production Rate	Other Species Fledged			Total Other Species	Total Birds Fledged	Overall Production Rate
				TS	CH	HW			
Steven Anderson	24	126	5.25	18	5	11	34	160	6.67
Bill Balmer	10	49	4.90		7		7	56	5.60
Fred Craig	73	406	5.56	23	4	97	124	530	7.26
Dan & Gail Filzen	8	31	3.88	10		13	23	54	6.75
Dave Fonger	71	302	4.25	22	7	10	39	341	4.80
Brad Foss	6	8	1.33				0	8	1.33
Leif Marking	95	361	3.80	22	10	5	37	398	4.19
Peter Tabor	1	4	4.00				0	4	4.00
Leif Tolokken	41	205	5.00	43		11	54	259	6.32
Joni Welda	12	35	2.92	10			10	45	3.75
Associates	129	400	3.10	31		16	47	447	3.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>1,927</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>2,302</b>	<b>4.90</b>

Species Key: TS - Tree Swallow, CH - Chickadee, HW - Wren

## Bluebird Production in Houses of Different Types

By Members of Brice Prairie Conservation Association

Year	Number		Production Rate	Predominant House Type
	Houses	Fledged		
1992	29	62	2.1	Hill Lake
1995	42	80	1.9	Hill Lake
1996	54	109	2.0	Tree Branch
1997	65	145	2.2	Tree Branch
1998	78	212	2.7	Tree Branch
1999	91	265	2.9	Herman Olson
2000	101	324	3.2	Herman Olson
2001	142	544	3.8	NABS
2002	285	1,138	4.0	NABS
2003	506	2,001	4.0	NABS
2004	741	3,066	4.1	NABS
2005	880	4,233	4.8	NABS
2006	858	4,756	5.5	NABS
2007	916	5,399	5.9	NABS
2008	977	4,228	4.3	NABS
2009	1,019	5,252	5.2	NABS
2010	1,001	4,915	4.9	NABS
2011	936	3,294	3.5	NABS
2012	862	4,679	5.4	NABS
2013	796	2,884	3.6	NABS
2014	724	2,668	3.7	NABS
2015	657	2,938	4.5	NABS
2016	608	2,560	4.2	NABS
2017	470	1,927	4.1	NABS

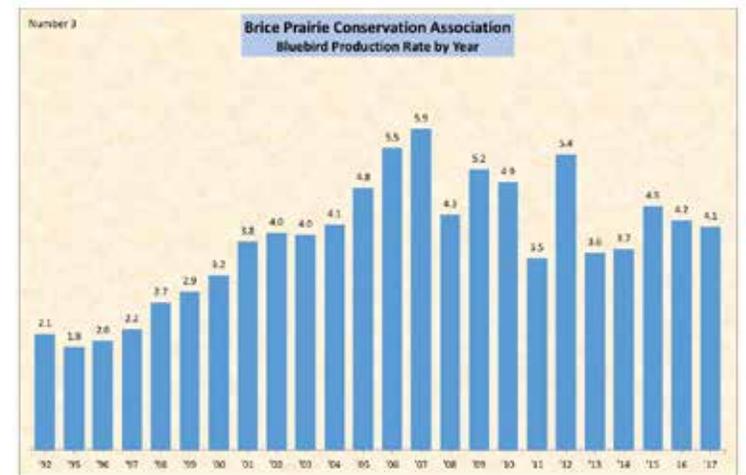
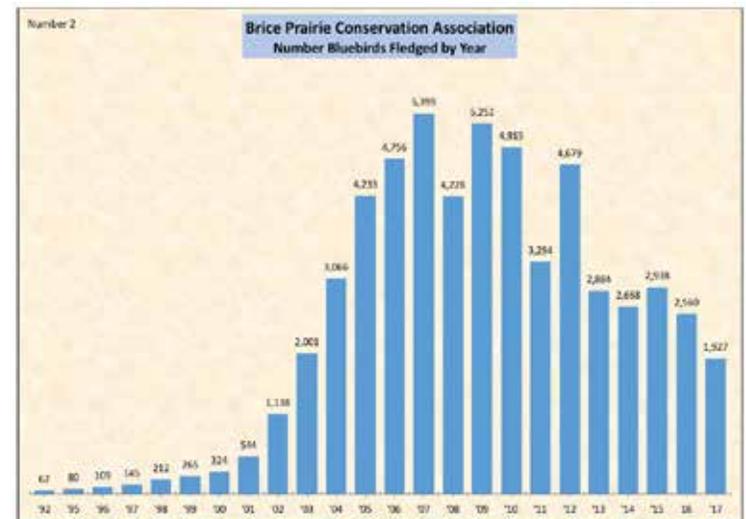
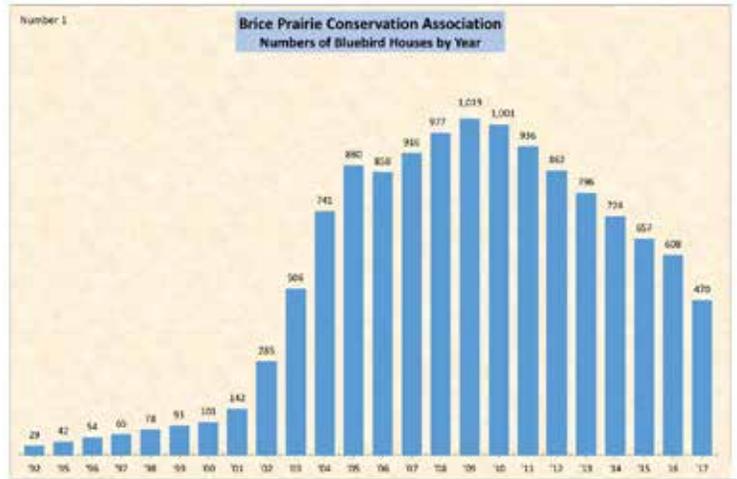
Total 57,679

the bluebird boxes, especially if they are located on the edge of bluebird habitat. House Sparrow attacks were more numerous for many trails and restricted bluebird production. The bluebirds prefer diversified agriculture, mowed, or grazed areas, and if the boxes are properly located and spaced the bluebirds will occupy them before the swallows (serious competitors) are capable of nesting in early spring.

In addition, the Marking bluebird associates produced 400 bluebird fledglings, 31 Tree Swallows, and 16 House Wrens as identified in the second table. These folks are not members of BPCA, but they like bluebirds and our technology for producing them, so they are willing to monitor and contribute to our efforts. They realize their efforts also benefit the bluebird population so we are thankful. This associate concept encourages more people to get involved in serious monitoring and keeping good records. Associates also reported more competition and predation with House Wrens and House Sparrows this year.

We attribute our success for producing bluebirds to providing a box with a cavity size and shape that appeals to them, selection of ideal habitat for box

location, spacing the boxes at least 200 yards, providing predator prevention for every box, moving boxes that failed to attract bluebirds after one year, and monitoring weekly to ensure the cavities are available to bluebirds that are searching for a home. House Sparrows interfered with bluebird nesting in many locations. In fact, 29 of the Marking 95 houses were invaded, some multiple times. Van Ert sparrow traps were used to eliminate 68 House Sparrows on the trails. House Wrens again were important predators and competitors on many bluebird trails. Our technology for bluebird production is effective, and we feel satisfied and rewarded with the bluebird responses to our efforts with 57,679 fledges reported since 1992.



Leif Marking





# A Seed Is Planted

By Gene Kroupa

Like many BRAW members, I enjoy gardening. Last spring I learned that I could also enjoy hosting bluebirds at the same time.

Thanks to Steve Sample, who helped me erect a bluebird house in my garden plot, I also learned some important lessons. House location is critical. Ideally, there has to be the right mix of open area for foraging, as well as a woodline for shade and protection.

Second it is a constant battle to ward off the nasty sparrows and pesky wrens. Right off a pair of bluebirds sought to use the house, but the nuisance birds fought them for it. Steve had warned me about this problem.

Finally, after I had destroyed several of the invaders' nests, the bluebirds settled in. Checking the box regularly proved rewarding. At first, four aquamarine eggs appeared in the grass-lined nest.

Then hungry hatchlings with gaping mouths filled the cavity. I could only imagine how many voracious vegetable eating insects it took to feed them. Each week I could mark progress as the small creatures grew to hefty fledglings. And then one day they took flight and went on their way – another first time success story.



# Spring Meeting of the Lafayette County Bluebird Society, Inc.

April 14 from 1:00-4:00 at the Town Bank Community Room at 15815 State Hwy 23, Darlington, WI

Hoo Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center from Durand, IL will have wild birds including a Great Horned Owl and Turkey Vulture. This program is funded by several banks in Lafayette County. For more information go to: [www.bluebirdhouse.org](http://www.bluebirdhouse.org) or email at [bluebirdhouse.org@gmail.com](mailto:bluebirdhouse.org@gmail.com) or call 608-922-2473.



A **Bring Back the Bluebirds** workshop will be held at Riveredge on Sat. March 17th at 1:00 PM to teach people how to attract a wide variety of cavity-nesting birds to their yard. The pros and cons of different nest box styles will be discussed and as well as the basics of how to maintain them. Sign up for the workshop on the Riveredge website at [riveredgenaturecenter.org](http://riveredgenaturecenter.org).

# BRAW Membership 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
- Print clearly

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

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

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

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

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

Telephone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

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

- \$15 to nest box construction with post & predator guard
  - \$100 for nest box trail
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ for 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.**

## BRAW ELECTED & APPOINTED OFFICERS

**President Patrick Ready**, 815 Sky Ridge DR., Madison, WI 53719 • 608/239-0791 • birdsready@gmail.com (term to 12/19)

**Vice President Steve Sample**, 422 Shepard Ter. Madison, WI 53705 • 708/606-8070 (term to 12/19)

**Secretary Claire Romanak**, 7175 Nehrbass Rd.; Athens, WI 54411 • 715/257-1905 • ribriver2@wildblue.net (Term to 12/19)

**Treasurer Dan Schroeder**, PO Box 133, Waupaca, WI 54981

• 920-475-8525 • brdanjoe@gmail.com (term to 12/19)

**Director Mike Helgren**, 1013 Georgetown Circle, Beaver Dam, WI 53916 • 920/885-4050 mhelgren@charter.net (term to 12/18)

**Director Fred Craig**, 3308 Nathan Lane, Holmen WI 54636 • 608/783-2225 266marycraig@gmail.com (term to 12/18)

**Director, Brad Zinda**, Stevens Point, WI • 3416 Soo Marie Ave., Stevens Point, WI 54481 • (715) 570-9587 • brdzinda@charter.net (term to 12/18)

**Director, Steve Fallon**, Oregon, WI • 974 Halcyon Days Ct., Oregon, WI. 53575 • scfallon@charter.net (term to 12/18)

### APPOINTED OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:

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

**County Coordinator Chair: Carol McDaniel**, 9320 Wicks Rd., Gratiot, WI 53541 • cjmcd\_98@yahoo.com • 608-922-2473

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

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

**Membership: Mike Ray**, 1120 N. Pleasantview Rd. Apt 204, Middleton, WI 53562 • mike.joseph.ray@gmail.com

**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 53095-4136 • 262/335-9843

**Website: Mike Ray**, 1120 N. Pleasantview Rd. Apt 204, Middleton, WI 53562 • mike.joseph.ray@gmail.com

### BRAW LIAISONS:

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

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

November 10, 2017

Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin  
c/o Dan Schroeder  
PO Box 133  
Waupaca, WI 54981-0133

Dear Dan,

On behalf of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, I am pleased to inform you that a contribution in the amount of \$500 has been awarded to the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin.

This gift comes from the Harold Ramon Cram, Jr. Bluebird Restoration Fund - one of the dozens of funds held by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin - created in 2016 for the purposes of supporting the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin.

Any acknowledgment of this gift should read: The Harold Ramon Cram, Jr. Bluebird Restoration Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

If you have any questions regarding this contribution, you can reach me at (608) 266-1430 or [caitlin.williamson@wisconsin.gov](mailto:caitlin.williamson@wisconsin.gov). The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is very pleased to provide support for your organization, and wish you the best in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Caitlin E. Williamson  
Director of Conservation Programs  
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin

Enclosures



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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

Mike Ray - Memberships

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**2018 BRAW  
Annual  
Convention**  
See page 2

### Wisconsin's SNOW-storm

Brad Zinda, BRAW Director

The winter of 2017-18 has been another year for the record books for Snowy Owls (*Bubo scandiacus*) spotted in the state. According to Ryan Brady, WDNR Bird Monitoring Coordinator, well over 200 have been reported in the state this winter.

Snowy Owls are an irruptive species, which means they don't always come this far south, but some years a lot of birds move into the area and further south.



The thoughts of why these birds have irruptions are likely dependent on the boom and bust cycles of lemming populations, their major food source in the tundra, along with other prey populations. The last big irruption was the winter of 2013-14.

It was the irruption in 2013-14 when several owl researchers collaborated to study the movements of Snowy Owls and formed Project SNOWstorm. To track their movements, Snowy Owls are fitted with cutting-edge transmitters that are solar powered and are transmitted through cell towers. A single transmitter costs \$3,000. These transmitters can store up to 100,000 locations, which allows for locations to be stored when birds fly out of cellular coverage. To date, Project SNOWstorm has fitted over 50 owls with transmitters in U.S. and has collected tons of data. This year, Wisconsin has four Snowy Owls that have been fitted with transmitters. Gene Jacobs, from Linwood Springs Research Station in Stevens Point, is currently the only person in the state that is federally licensed to trap and fit Snowy Owls with these transmitters. I have been assisting him this year and we were able to trap and fit a transmit-

ter on a Snowy Owl in agricultural fields near the Buena Vista Grasslands in southwestern Portage County. It is a juvenile male and was named "Bancroft." Another owl fitted with a transmitter was trapped by a falconer at the Austin Straubel International Airport in Green Bay and relocated to the Buena Vista Grasslands, well away from the dangerous airport. The other two owls were trapped near Arlington, WI and Freedom, WI.



Major funding for the four transmitters deployed in the state came from the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Public Service Foundation, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, and Madison Audubon Society, along with several individual donors.

To learn more about Project SNOWstorm and to track all the owls that have been part of the study, go to their website at [www.projectsnowstorm.org](http://www.projectsnowstorm.org)



Photos by Pat Ready