



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.

Significant Drop in Data Reports

See Page 3



**BRAW Photo Contest
First Place
Barb Cullen**

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**Is It Time to Renew
Your Membership?**

President's Report

I want to thank all of you who attended our state convention in Green Bay in September. By all accounts, it was a success thanks to Pat Ready, convention chair, Gene Birr's volunteers and the outstanding speakers.



There was a fund-raising record breaker with our silent auction items, especially the woodcarving of two bluebirds on a nest box done by John Vulcani. Plus we were very close to exceeding the convention attendance record.

If you weren't able to attend, go to our website www.braw.org and view the excellent videos of the sessions prepared by Mike Crawford and posted by Andy Garcia-Rivera. We are starting to look at next year; so, stay tuned.

Meanwhile, BRAW will be present at the Madison Garden Expo. February 10-12, 2023, held in the Alliant Energy Center in Madison. Set your calendars and I'm looking forward to seeing you there.

You may have noticed that BRAW is making appearances in a number of organization newsletters related to bluebirds, and with promoting our 2022 BRAW awardees in local newspapers, too. Our organization is fortunate to have Board member, Gene Kroupa, who has written several articles that have appeared in numerous state and national publications. He has sent the awardees' announcements to their local newspapers with great success.

An idea that may help encourage people to start as new monitors is BRAW's "Nest in Peace" program. Finding an open area cemetery and placing/monitoring a few nest boxes serves as a good way of encouraging new, interested people to join us. Sometimes starting small is the best method. Plant a seed and it may grow!

Just a reminder that we do provide free nest boxes to members. Thanks to the Carol McDaniel Legacy Fund and John McDaniel, we have the ability to provide boxes. They can be used as replacements or new placements. However,

the costs of shipping is an issue. For now we are asking recipients to make a donation to cover them. The Board will also be discussing some new membership promotions at its December meeting.

Now, for some "Nitty-Gritty" stuff. No, not the dance routine for those of you who were swingers in the 60's! Seriously, we need to have some of our experienced monitors take on the role of county coordinator for those counties lacking one. The Milwaukee area is presenting a problem for a new monitor who is seeking information about where there were trails. If you can help, let me know. Also, Gene Birr, our county coordinator committee chairperson, will help train anyone interested in becoming a county coordinator. Please, give it some thought! Our Ray Cram Legacy Fund provides funds to help cover county coordinator expenses.

Another issue that BRAW has addressed over the last two years with little resolve involves the Farm Services Administration's Conservation Reserve Program. Many of you are undoubtedly familiar with the placement of farm or associated lands into this program to prevent soil erosion, help water conservation, and enhance wildlife production.

Unfortunately, within the restrictions of CRP is a rule that bans all "structures" from these designated lands. Many monitors have found themselves forced to remove nesting boxes because they have been labeled "structures." Actually, this ban is counter-productive to a key goal of the program which is to enhance native plants and animals. Bluebirds apparently do not count!

Now, some good news: Gail Smith, of Middleton, an enthusiastic birder and retired music teacher, has joined our BRAW Board of Directors. Her insights and determination to help bluebird populations are well received! Thank you Gail. Stay warm this winter, but let's think about spring and the blues! Thanks for what you do!

Steve

BRAW Welcomes These Members

Jay Brooks, New Glarus
Kathy Gabriel, Mt. Pleasant
Anna Hudson, Kenosha
Barbara Styczynski, Suamico
Robert Baderstadt, McHenry, IL
Charles & Miranda Demske, DePere
Patty Czyns, Mauston
Janna Soerens, Howards Grove
Sarah Beilfuss, Black Creek
Kathie Brock, Madison

Winter 2022 Donations

Jeff Rusinow, \$2000
Sharon & Jerome Woelfel, \$300
Dave & Patti Becker, \$25
Donald Hoffman, \$30
Jon Frohling, \$15
Jim Neider, \$15 nest box
Gretchen Reis, \$10
David & Sandra Fonger, \$10 research
Sally Riemer, \$15 nest box
Bernie Hoefgen, \$25
Frederick Ochs, \$25
Barbara Kuss, \$5
Kathie Brock, \$25

In Memory of Myron "Mike" Beyers - John Fjelstad, \$15

BRAW & Amazon Smile!

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

Attention-Urgent Call for Data by December 31st.

Hi Fellow Bluebirders:

Early indications were that this year would produce a little bit of a bump from last year's big decline in bluebird fledge numbers. However, we've seen a decline in the number of monitors submitting their data, and as things stand, our reported EAB fledges are barely above last year's totals.

I know last year was tough for the birds and perhaps a bit discouraging for the monitors as well. Regardless, the birds STILL need our help! If you've already submitted your data, thank you for your efforts. If you haven't submitted your data for 2022, please do so. We'd like to get numbers that reflect how our sample of the bluebird population is doing in the state and can only do so with your help.

As a reminder, please use our easy online form, or, if you prefer, you can submit by snail mail, by sending the printed form to me at the address, below. The electronic version is quicker, easier and cheaper (no stamps), but as long as we get your data, we'll be happy! Please submit your data before December 31st. Thanks for all you do for the birds!! **Steve Fallon, Data Director,**
974 Halcyon Days Court, Oregon, WI 53575

BRAW EZ Summary Form

Use this form to report your nest box results for the season.

DEADLINE: DEC. 31

_____ No. of boxes* _____ Boxes used by Bluebirds*

_____ Bluebird eggs laid _____ Bluebird eggs hatched

_____ Bluebirds fledged * _____ Tree Swallows fledged

_____ Chickadees fledged _____ House Wrens fledged

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

*County _____ Year: _____

*Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*Phone (_____) - _____

*email: _____

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

Comments: _____

EZ Summary data can be emailed to: wisconsinbluebirds@gmail.com

Or mail to: **Data Summary Director , 974 Halcyon Days Ct., Oregon, WI. 53575**

The Unbearable Nesting Box!

By Len Place

While checking the nest box trail on June 17th at the Pine Lake Bible Camp NE Wild Rose, Wisconsin a destroyed box reared its ugly head. The box was mounted on a sturdy T-post driven about 18 inches into Mother Earth in a wide open meadow. On a previous check a wren was constructing a nest in preparation for eggs and babies. The inquisitive bear must have heard chirping babies and it decided to satisfy its appetite. The innocent box was no match for the bruin. The bruin's brute strength bent the post to about a 60-degree angle. Its paws and claws tore the box into many pieces and some small birds helped satisfy its hunger. One of the photos shows the bent post and the other is a close up of the destroyed box. It was almost seven years to the day that at another box (different design) close to this destruction, there was another bear attempt. The box was bent at about a 45-degree angle, but the bear did not destroy the box. It probably was scared off. I bent the post back to vertical, and the five bluebird eggs, loose in the box, were put back in the nest and mom hatched all five eggs.

Over my 20 plus years of monitoring a trail I have had boxes blown apart by shotgun slugs/birdshot, a falling tree smashed a box, loggers backed machinery over a box, and a couple of boxes were destroyed by someone with a bat or similar weapon.



2022 BRAW Convention Was a Success!

By Patrick Ready, Editor

After a 2-year hiatus due to COVID we were finally able to have our annual convention. Held in Green Bay back in September we had around 100 members in attendance. The Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary had plenty of room for the program presentations, Silent Auction and tables for lunch.

Many items were donated for the Silent Auctions and almost all were sold making this the best Silent Auction ever! The woodcarving of a pair of bluebirds on a nest box by John Vulcani drew the top bid. Nestboxes, predator guards and sparrow traps recieved good bids.

All of the excellent presentations can be found at braw.org thanks to Mike Crawford and Andy Garcia-Rivera.

Plans are underway for our 2023 Convention to be held at Horicon Marsh State Wildlife. No date has been set just yet. To be announced in the next *Wisconsin Bluebird*.



Memuna Khan gave an update on research projects her students are working on for BRAW.



Dick Nikolai gave a program on Purple Martins and how to attract them.



President Steve Sample opened the meeting at 9 AM.



Wisconsin Bluebird editor Partick Ready presented Attracting Eastern Bluebirds and Other Cavity Nesters.



Woodcarving by John Vulcani.



Bill Volkert gave an excellent presentation on bird migration with many questions from members afterwards.

A big thanks to all the volunteers that helped make this convention a success.

A few of the Silent Auction items.



County Coordinator News

Gene Birr, CC Chair

Now that our fall convention has passed, I am already looking forward to the return of bluebirds to our trails next spring. Thanks to each of you that attended our get together in Green Bay and to those who came up and said hello and introduced yourself as a county coordinator.

We are always in need of a coordinator in the many counties which do not have one. Now we have two new vacancies and one new coordinator to announce. In **Green Lake County**, **Dave Marivitz** has stepped down and **Michael Gutschenritter** has resigned from **Waukesha County**. In **Marinette County**, **Barb Allen** has agreed to serve as the coordinator there in addition to monitoring over 250 boxes in 5 counties.

I urge any County Coordinator that does not receive my emails requesting contributions to this quarterly column to send me your email address and verify that I have your correct email address. Any CC that doesn't have email is urged to send me your report by mail. Thank You.

Door County, Charlotte Lukes

I am going to offer to present my Bluebird Trail Power Point program at Crossroads at Big Creek in Sturgeon Bay in early March next year and probably will do that slide program again for The Ridges Sanctuary nest-building workshop, also in March. The dates to be determined.

LaCrosse County, Scott Kinninger

Hello everyone, Like all of you reading this I'm looking forward to seeing the bluebird numbers from 2022. In my small sample area I felt that 2022 showed improved numbers of nesting birds from the previous year. I'm hoping most of you had similar experiences. This winter I plan on making a few

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	2022	Door	Co.	Nest	Box	Reports				
2										
3	Last Name	First Name	# Bxs	EB use	EB Eggs	EB Hat	EB FL	TS F	BCC F	HW F
4	Anderson	Nick	11	6	35	34	34	0	5	24
5	Andrae	Marjorie	8	5	31	27	27	5	0	10
6	Basten	Susan	10	3	14	11	8	24	0	0
7	Blair	Jim	10	8	23	18	18	3	10	0
8	Eckers	Cathy	3	1	6	6	6	0	0	0
9	Doell	Karen	16	6	17	16	15	11	0	6
10	Freyman	Sarah	2	1	5	5	5	0	0	3
11	Hansotia	Marilyn	10	2	11	11	11	0	6	17
12	Holey	Mark	5	2	8	3	3	4	0	0
13	Keys	Brenda								
14	Krueger	Dean	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
15	Lovasik	Teresa								
16	Lukes	Charlotte	22	17	100	74	74	22	0	0
17	Lukes	Wendy	20	3	14	13	13	43	0	32
18	Madden	Mike	8	2	9	9	9	5	4	11
19	Miller	Ed	18	8	42	35	35	19	0	50
20	Moes	Caroline					4			
21	Osinski	Ray	15	6	29	18	18	12	0	11
22	Onsrud	Signe	78	44	273	225	203	64	11	8
23	Peters	Glenna	5	1	5	5	5	4	0	0
24	Seubert	Sherry	2	1	5	5	5	0	0	0
25	Teich	Ben	68	11	46	36	36	90	11	52
26	Wickstrom	Eric	19	9	54	46	42	26	19	13
27										
28	Grand	Totals	333	136	727	597	571	332	66	249

Door County results of its monitors in 2022

bluebird houses and potentially make a few connections with property owners in order to expand my trail. If anyone in the LaCrosse area wants help with making birdhouses please let me know. I have a home woodshop and would be happy to help. Have a great winter, keep those bird

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feeders full and enjoy some good bird-watching.

Waukesha County, Michael Gutschenritter

Gene,

I am no longer a member of BRAW, as my duties in my personal and professional life have developed. I can not continue to be a county coordinator for Waukesha.

My efforts with bluebird conservation will remain, but not in this role. Thank you for understanding.
Michael

**Eau Claire County, Rita Gundry
2022 BB Nesting Season
Observations from Larry Liegel,
Rita's brother**

I have a 25 nesting box trail in **Sauk County** in the Town of Franklin south of Loganville. In 2022, I had an acceptable BB occupancy rate, with 16 boxes with at least one BB nesting attempt. What I experienced was a decrease in total fledglings, due to 2 factors. Two of my boxes had very early nesting and egg laying with 5 eggs in both boxes. Those 10 eggs froze and were non-viable., which really cut into my overall percentage of fledglings vs number of eggs laid. The other factor that decreased my overall production was something that I thought was unusual and no one had an answer, was that in the second nesting cycle, I had 3 boxes with a total of 14 eggs that never hatched. There was no predation in those boxes. I assumed those eggs were not fertilized. In those cases, I observed the hen attempting to incubate, and eventually gave up. This was after July 4th. Additionally, it seemed to me that in at least half of all nesting attempts, there was a later than usual start. Did some BBs arrive later than usual in the Spring? I don't know the answer.

I have an 18 box trail in **Eau Claire**, surrounding a light industrial park and adjacent soccer park. There are many building sites vacant in the business park where I have permission from City Park staff to site and monitor my trail. In 2022, I did not observe a BB on my trail until the middle of May, unusually late, I thought. Of the 16 boxes, 9 were even-

tually occupied by BBs, which is very acceptable. But again, with late nesting starts, I had fewer 2nd nestings. Of the 12 years I have had this trail, this year I had the fewest fledges, a total of 36.

My production was down for the third consecutive year, but still had 139 total fledges in both counties, for which I am thankful.

In September, my fellow Blue Birder in Eau Claire, Bernie Hoefgen, and I re-sited and replaced several nesting boxes along the Chippewa River Bike Trail SW of Eau Claire toward Caryville. Bernie monitors this trail. He is a bicyclist and gets his miles in monitoring the trail. Bernie has several friends who also have 1-2 boxes to whom he advises.

Oconto County, Gene Birr

My trails produced about 15% more bluebirds this year than last, a modest improvement. I had 84 BB fledglings compared to 73 in 111 boxes in 2021. I'll be replacing many of my older boxes with new ones that I will make this winter using lumber that I got from 3 large white pine trees that blew over in my yard in this summer's storm. I also am replacing 4 boxes on 2 cemeteries, with Carol

McDaniel Legacy boxes that I received at the convention as part of the Nest in Peace program. In October I helped Cordula Van Den Heuvel repair, replace or remove several boxes on her trails in Oconto.

Many of these boxes in public areas will have attached laminated ID labels supplied by BRAW. These include the name and phone number of the monitor and BRAW's bluebird logo and website. They are available to any monitor who requests them from President Steve Sample.

Inspired by working with Dick Nickolai and Cordula on their Purple Martin colonies in Oconto, and his presentation on martins at the convention, I have decided to start a martin colony on my new home property near Oconto Falls. In September, I joined the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association (WPMA) and the national PMCA and ordered the aluminum pole, T-14 martin house and gourds needed to begin. Then on a warm 72 degree day in early November, Steve Mayer helped me to assemble and erect the pole, pulley, cable and brake winch system. Now the pole is up and ready for the house and gourds that will be added in late spring while I patiently wait for the arrival of my first purple martins—hopefully.

List of County Coordinators			
County	Name	Phone	Email
ADAMS	Myron Byers	608-586-4833	
ASHLAND	Rich & Carol Becker	715-274-3200	richfstop@gmail.com
BARRON	NO APPOINTEE		
BAYFIELD	NO APPOINTEE		
BROWN	Steve Mayer	920-412-6069	mayersj511@aol.com
BUFFALO	NO APPOINTEE		
BURNETT	NO APPOINTEE		
CALUMET	NO APPOINTEE		
CHIPPEWA	Debbie Anderson	715-382-4639	jradma@centurytel.net
CLARK	NO APPOINTEE		
COLUMBIA	Mark & Sue Foote-Martin	608-333-9645	marksuemartin@gmail.com
CRAWFORD	NO APPOINTEE		
DANE	Pat Ready	608-239-0791	birdsready@gmail.com
DODGE	Jack Bartholmai	920-887-1505	920-210-2325
DOOR	Charlotte Lukes	920-823-2478	clukes@mwwb.net
DOUGLAS	Charles Bergsten	715-364-2679	charles477@centurytel.net
DUNN	NO APPOINTEE		
EAU CLAIRE	Rita Gundry	715-732-8803	gundryrk@uwec.edu
FLORENCE	Ed Kowalski	715-732-8803	
FOND DU LAC	Memua Khan	920-312-8142	khanm@ripon.edu

County	Name	Phone	Email
FOREST	NO APPOINTEE		
GRANT	Jim Hess	608-288-8662	jimhess5599@gmail.com
GREEN	Kathleen Dreikosen	608-325-5562	kddd@tds.net
GREEN LAKE	NO APPOINTEE		
IOWA	Dale & Doris Moody	608-846-5024	drydog93@yahoo.com
IRON	NO APPOINTEE		
JACKSON	Darrell Eberhardt	715-963-4775	
JEFFERSON	NO APPOINTEE		
JUNEAU	NO APPOINTEE		
KENOSHA	Stan Rosenstiel		mrstanmr@yahoo.com
KEWAUNEE	Don Pritzl	920-845-2436	
LACROSSE	Scott Kinninger	608-385-6594	kinny939@gmail.com
LAFAYETTE	Jim Hess	608-288-8662	jimhess5599@gmail.com
LANGLADE	NO APPOINTEE		
LINCOLN	NO APPOINTEE		
MANITOWOC	NO APPOINTEE		
MARATHON	Claire Romanak	715-257-1905	ribriver2@wildblue.net
MARINETTE	Barb Allen	920-737-2633	BARBIEBLUEBIRD@GMAIL.COM
MARQUETTE	NO APPOINTEE		
MENOMINEE	NO APPOINTEE		
MILWAUKEE	NO APPOINTEE		
MONROE	NO APPOINTEE		
OCONTO	Gene Birr	920-373-2551	gbbird22@gmail.com
ONEIDA	John Sweeney	715-272-1781	sjsweeney@frontiernet.net
OUTAGAMIE	Steve Mayer	920-412-6069	mayersj511@aol.com
OZAUKEE	Mary Holleback	262-335-9843	mholleback@gmail.com
PEPIN	NO APPOINTEE		
PIERCE	Jim Beix	715-425-6981	jbeix@dishup.us
POLK	NO APPOINTEE		
PORTAGE	NO APPOINTEE		
PRICE	NO APPOINTEE		
RACINE	Stan Rosenstiel		mrstanmr@yahoo.com
RICHLAND	NO APPOINTEE		
ROCK	Rod Courtier	608-882-5859	racourtier@charter.net
RUSK	NO APPOINTEE		
SAUK	Donna & Bill Stehling	608-643-0824	Donnamstehling@gmail.com
SAWYER	Diane Chambers	715-634-2451	zippydi@centurytel.net
SHAWANO	Ruthann Meiers	715-758-2463	alstaxidermy@granitewave.com
SHEBOYGAN	Lee Curtis	920-838-2193	
ST CROIX	Lowell Peterson	715-247-3243	
TAYLOR	NO APPOINTEE		
TREMPEALEAU	NO APPOINTEE		
VERNON	NO APPOINTEE		
VILAS	Bob Butzer	715-356-2215	
WALWORTH	John Scholtz	262-672-1657	johnscholtz@hotmail.com
WASHBURN	NO APPOINTEE		
WASHINGTON	Mary Holleback	262-335-9843	mholleback@gmail.com
WAUKESHA	NO APPOINTEE		
WAUPACA	Craig & Sheila Beyer	715-281-7783	huntsend@wolfnet.net
WAUSHARA	NO APPOINTEE		
WINNEBAGO	Dave Misterek	920-233-6770	dmisterek47@gmail.com
WOOD	NO APPOINTEE		

If you wish to be a County Coordinator or need more information contact Gene Birr at 920-373-2551 • gbbird22@gmail.com

Pierce County, Jim Beix

I just talked to Lowell Peterson. He, Jim Higgins and I will plan to give Bluebird presentations this Spring in St.Croix Falls, Prescott. I will explore opportunities in other communities. We have nest boxes, slide presentation, and holed tree branches to help in our efforts.

Marinette County, Barb Allen

Barb has graciously accepted the duty of being the new CC here, in addition to her efforts to monitor many other trails in 4 other counties. I'm sure we'll be hearing many reports from her trails in the coming years.



Patrick Ready

Dane County, Patrick Ready

In October I gave a program on American Kestrels at Wild Birds Unlimited in Madison. About 15 attended and had some good Q & A after. In some areas in Wisconsin Kestrel numbers have declined in recent years. This year I had 2 successful broods that fledged 9 chicks. We were able to band 2 adults and all the chicks. One adult was a banded chick from last year.

In November I gave a talk on Attracting Bluebirds and other Cavity Nesters to the Green/Rock County Audubon club. About 25 members attended. Nice to be able to spread the word in these southern counties.

Winter caught me by surprise when we got early snow in mid-November. I still have a few trail task to take care of so I hope to get out before the real cold temps set in!

Since BRAW will be having a booth at the WHA Garden Expo in Madison in February I am planning to give 2 presentations on Bluebirds if they give us that opportunity. We don't always get chosen.

BRAW Honors 2022 Award Recipients

By Gene Kroupa, Director

Once again BRAW pauses to acknowledge the contributions of members and citizens who have made special efforts on behalf of bluebirds, the environment and the organization.

“As in past years, this group of recipients represents the heart and soul of BRAW’s dedication to restoration of the Eastern Bluebird,” said President Steve Sample.



Mary Hollenback
Lifetime Achievement Award

Mary Holleback, of West Bend, received the 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award. Holleback was cited for her many years of conducting nature workshops for school children. President Steve Sample noted that “she has worked tirelessly to introduce them to bluebirds and the environment.”

As an environmental educator at the Riveredge Nature Center, Saukville, for over 30 years, Holleback said, “I can’t imagine how many students I’ve taught over the years.”

Since 1981, she has annually monitored on average 30 bluebird nest boxes at the center. Over the years those boxes have produced 4,741 fledglings, of which 1,132 were bluebirds.

The West Bend resident firmly believes that “the more children learn about nature, the more they will want to take care of it.” She was introduced to bird watching at age seven during hikes organized by her father.

Later on as an adult, a neighbor,

Sherry Ullius, of West Bend, introduced her to bluebirds. Both joined and became active in BRAW. “Bluebirds are such beautiful, quiet and unassuming birds. Who wouldn’t love them?” said Holleback.

She suggests that if folks want to help birds in the future, they should “think about how their daily activities and decisions have positive and negative effects on the environment.” To become more active, Holleback recommends joining groups like BRAW, the Audubon Society or the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership.

Upon receiving the award, Holleback thanked BRAW for “its continued efforts to help bluebirds and other cavity nesters.”



Lowell Peterson
Lifetime Achievement Award

Lowell Peterson, of Somerset, received the 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award. Peterson was cited for his many years of conducting workshops for school children. President Steve Sample noted that “he was one of the founding members of BRAW’s School and Youth Committee which developed educational programs specifically for young people.”

Over the last 12 years, Peterson has given presentations about bluebirds and cavity nesters to over 1,000 fourth and fifth grade students throughout the northern one-half of the state.

The Somerset resident’s interest in birds and other wildlife started as a child on the family farm. “Back then meadowlarks, bobolinks and other birds were common in our fields and pastures,” he recalls.

Three decades ago, Peterson attended a presentation about bluebirds put on by a park ranger at the Interstate

Park. “As a result, I joined BRAW and put up two nest boxes on my five-acre property,” said Peterson. “Within days one box had a bluebird pair and the other had tree swallows nesting.”

Today, Peterson monitors 24 nest boxes that produced 85 Eastern Bluebird fledglings this year. A key concern of his is “how can we involve people from urban areas with the opportunity to observe and help birds and the environment?”

Peterson believes that “keeping our green spaces, such as school grounds, golf courses and nature preserves, more natural with less mowing and use of fewer chemicals would be a positive step.”

Upon receiving the award, Peterson commended BRAW for its work in helping all cavity nesters in Wisconsin.



Greg & Sheila Beyer
Bluebirders of the Year

Craig and Sheila Beyer, of Ogdensburg, received the Bluebirders of the Year Award. The Beyers were recognized for their continuing efforts to help restore and increase the population of Eastern Bluebirds in the state over the last 25 years.

Of special note is the fact that they have put up nest boxes in two dozen rural and small town cemeteries in Waupaca and surrounding counties. Craig builds these nest boxes which Sheila helps install and monitor.

According to Sheila, “this year we had a total of 332 bluebirds fledge of which 98 were from cemetery nest boxes.”

To help birds, Craig suggests not allowing pet cats to roam freely. “A University of Wisconsin-Madison study

shows that feral and pet cats can have a devastating effect on bird populations,” noted Craig.

In accepting the award, Sheila said, “We are not after awards, we just enjoy seeing and helping bluebirds.” BRAW president Steve Sample also lauded the Beyers for their many years of service in educating the public and helping to build a stable population of Eastern Bluebirds.



Larry Meiller
Communicator of the Year

Larry Meiller, of Madison, received the 2022 Communicator of the Year Award. The long-time host of The Larry Meiller Show on Wisconsin Public Radio was cited for being an “important and significant environmental spokesperson for Wisconsin.”

According to BRAW president Steve Sample, Meiller has “worked to educate the public about the state’s many plant, insect and animal species, including the Eastern Bluebird.”

In reflecting on his contributions, Meiller noted: “Throughout my career, I have devoted a large portion of my radio show for discussions about the environment, conservation and wildlife, especially birds.”

Meiller’s interest in birds began while growing up on the family farm near Cottage Grove. “Both of my parents loved birds and I learned a lot about them from my father. Also, Mrs. Eleonore Dahl, my grade school teacher, introduced me to many great books about the outdoors,” he noted.

Bluebirds, cardinals and orioles are

his favorite birds. To help birds now and in the future, Meiller suggests “providing great habitat on our own properties and supporting organizations like BRAW that do so much good for birds.”

Upon receiving his award, Meiller said: “This award is a great honor for me. The work BRAW does helps all



Bob Blasus
Educator of the Year

species of birds and is inspiring.”

Bob Blasus, of Eagle River, received the 2022 Educator of the Year Award. According to BRAW President Steve Sample, “Blasus has combined building nest boxes with workshops to educate the public about how to locate, maintain and monitor them.”

A member of the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, Blasus said “as an educator, one of my goals is to transfer my passion to students.” He also formerly served as a director of SCARCE, an environmental nonprofit dedicated to creating sustainable communities through hands-on education programs for schools and organizations.

The Illinois high school chemistry teacher last year donated 200 backpacks loaded with supplies to the Florence Middle/High School. The Rhinelander High School has also received the same donation from Blasus, who is moving to a home he owns in Sugar Camp.

Blasus feels that humankind can help birds in the future by “first protecting their environment, especially the habitat that they depend upon.”

In accepting his award, Blasus said



Kevin Hurd
Facilitator of the Year

organizations like BRAW “help educate and direct efforts to restore and sustain bird populations.”

Kevin Hurd, of Middleton, received the Facilitator of the Year Award.

Hurd was recognized for his work at Pleasant View Golf Course in maintaining habitat suitable to Eastern Bluebirds.

President Steve Sample noted that “over the last four decades Kevin Hurd’s enthusiastic support of installing nest boxes has helped boost the local population of bluebirds. This year those 40 nest boxes produced 52 bluebird fledglings, as well as 124 other cavity nesters.”

A life-long nature lover, Hurd said: “I love seeing the birds cross the prairie and open spaces. Over the years I’ve enjoyed seeing the population of bluebirds increase at the golf course.” He cited the assistance he has received from Gary Gard and Steve Sample in making this growth possible.

In accepting the award, Hurd said, “Kudos to BRAW for all the dedicated work you do on behalf bluebirds.” Back in the early 1980’s, there were only an estimated 600 nesting pairs of bluebirds left in the state which led to the formation of BRAW.

David Lucey, of Cross Plains, received the Facilitator of the Year Award. Lucey was recognized for coordinating BRAW-funded research

continued next page

BRAW Award recipients . . .
continued from page 9



Dave Lucey
Facilitator of the Year

with Ripon College that seeks to find a method of preventing House Sparrows from taking over Eastern Bluebird nests.

President Steve Sample noted that through his work with The Prairie Enthusiasts, Black Earth Creek Watershed Association and the Audubon Kestrel Project, Lucey is helping improve habitat for bluebirds, butterflies and other wildlife species.

Lucey created his own prairie 45 years ago. "I placed a bluebird box there that attracted a bluebird pair. After watching the parents nesting and later the young fledge, I was hooked," he said.

Today the retired Waunakee Middle School teacher monitors trails with 52 nest boxes that this year produced 115

fledglings.

Lucey suggests the most important thing humankind can do to help birds is "maintain and create new habitat. Growing up on a farm, I developed an appreciation for open spaces and the many creatures inhabiting them," Lucey noted. Now, he is helping to create a 17-acre oak savannah at Indian Lake County Park to help the many bluebirds there.

In accepting the award, Lucey said, "I am very appreciative of BRAW for choosing to recognize me with this award. The organization has helped me greatly increase my knowledge of how to help bluebirds."



Julie Melton
Facilitator of the Year

Julie Melton, of Madison, received the Facilitator of the Year Award.

Melton was recognized for her work at Holy Wisdom Monastery with prairie restoration as well as her environmental education programs. "I love leading people to a better understand-

ing of how birds are connected to the prairie plants and the whole environment," she added.

President Steve Sample noted that "through her efforts Melton has helped to maintain and increase the Eastern Bluebird population, key goals of our statewide organization."

A fifth grade teacher who got Melton excited about birds is why she is now involved with being dedicated to the "care of the earth and its creatures." Today she also works with Mike Crawford, a BRAW director, who maintains and monitors a bluebird trail with 25 boxes at the monastery.

Melton suggests the most important thing humankind can do to help birds is to "create healthy habitat in our yards, on school grounds, at places of worship and anywhere there is room for native plants."

A member of the Friends of Wisdom Prairie, Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Madison Audubon Society, Wisconsin Wetlands Association and the Sierra Club, Melton believes folks can contribute by supporting such groups' efforts.

In accepting the award, Melton said, "My passion is fueled by my love for birds. I appreciate the work BRAW is doing to help restore the bluebird population."

Nominate for 2023

There are so many more bluebirders and citizens who deserve recognition for helping native cavity nesters through their hard work and dedication. Send your 2023 nominations to any of the BRAW officers and directors listed in this newsletter or use the email info@braw.org.

Do's and Don'ts of Bluebirding

Here are a few ideas to think about over the long winter.

Do put up nest boxes in suitable habitat for bluebirds.

Don't put up nest boxes where House Sparrows are numerous. It will be very frustrating to attract bluebirds with sparrows around.

Do add a predator guard to pole or nest box.

Don't let raccoons or cats get to your boxes.

Do plant native fruit bearing trees and shrubs for bluebirds to eat.

Don't let buckthorn and honeysuckle take over hedges or woodlands.

Do order a NABS-style nest box from BRAW. (Contact Steve Sample for details)

Don't buy inferior nest boxes at big box stores.

Do look forward to next year and reporting your data to BRAW!

Skylight Nest Box Study Report

By Kira Stark and Dr. Memuna Khan, Ripon College

Skylight nest boxes have been recommended as a House Sparrow deterrent by Dean Rust, former president of the Pennsylvania Bluebird Society. Skylight nest boxes have a small plexiglass window on the roof of the box. BRAW asked Ripon College to test this idea with a scientific study. Financial support came from the Carol McDaniel Legacy Fund.

We hypothesized that all of the species would prefer the opaque, “normal” box to the skylight box. This summer with the help of 32 citizen scientists, mostly BRAW members, we executed the first year of the Skylight Nest Box Study. The study spanned 19 counties and consisted of 83 nest box pairs, one each with a skylight or an opaque roof (Fig. 1).

The boxes were installed 3 feet apart and oriented in

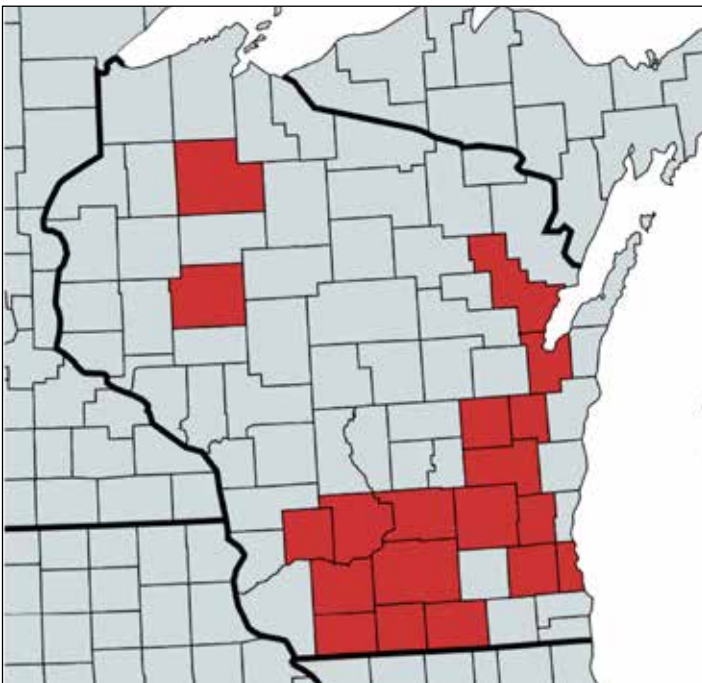


Figure 1: BRAW members and citizen scientists installed 83 box pairs in 19 counties across the state of WI for the Skylight Nest Box Project.



Figure 2: Nest box pairs were installed at locations with a history of sparrow problems. The skylight box is on the left and was placed 3 feet away from the opaque roofed box.

the same direction (Fig. 2). Volunteers monitored the boxes weekly and reported the nest box status with a weekly report form. Once a bird had made a nest and laid at least one egg, the other box was made unavailable. The occupied box remained unavailable until the occupied box’s nest had fledged.

House Sparrows were managed by oiling eggs and removing eggs and nests once the eggs became cold. We oiled the eggs to maintain incubation behavior of the female sparrow and prevent the pair from seeking a nest box elsewhere on the trail.

All species preferred the standard opaque houses over the skylight nest boxes. We observed that 88% (73/83) of all nesting activity occurred in opaque roofed boxes (Fig. 3). House Sparrows and native species exhibited similar preferences. House Sparrows exhibited nesting activities in 47 locations and used skylight nest boxes only twice. Eastern Bluebirds never used a skylight box, while Tree Swallows nested in skylight boxes six times (Fig 4). In three of these instances, a House Sparrow was occupying the opaque roofed box but had not laid an egg.



Figure 3: Nest boxes with an opaque roof were preferred by all bird species.

These results are suggestive that native species will tolerate skylight boxes when competition with House Sparrows is intense. Now that we have established the preference between the two boxes, we plan to continue the project for another summer. We are currently designing this new study to assess if native species are more likely to successfully nest in skylight boxes if they are the only choice available.

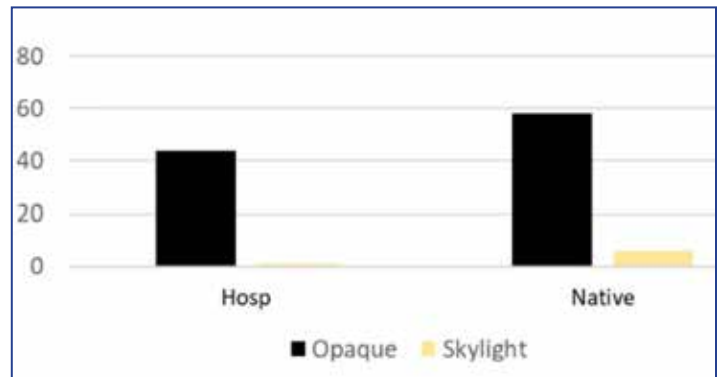


Figure 4: House Sparrows (HOSP) and native species showed similar preferences for nest boxes with an opaque roof. (Fischer’s exact test, $p=0.24$)



Winter Work Warms Up Bluebirders

By Gene Kroupa

Winter consists of months with an “R” in their names. To oldtimers, this rule of thumb signaled the best season to harvest and eat oysters.

But for us bluebirders winter is also a great time to repair, replace, restock, and relearn. There are probably other related activities that begin with this strong letter, but here are some things that might be of interest to you.

Repair. Nest boxes held together with staples or brads don’t fare well when exposed to the elements, grappled by wild critters or head-pushed by cattle and horses. Besides pulling apart at the seams, the roofs, walls, doors and floors often crack.

So, use brass wood screws or drywall screws to pull the parts back in place. Cracked pieces can be sealed with wood filler or paintable caulk. Unusable pieces can be saved as templates for making new ones. A coat or two of wood stain and the old house is ready to go.

Replace. Sometimes nest boxes are in such poor shape after many years of use that it’s best to start over with a new improved model. You can’t go wrong with a Fred Craig cedar NABS style nest box.

However, there are others for sale in stores and online that have adequate thickness (at least ¾-inch solid wood), accurate size entrance holes (1½-inch), drop down doors and provision for ventilation (but not too many drilled holes that can invite insects).

You usually get what you pay for but

shop around for boxes that meet the basic requirements mentioned above. President Steve might have some free Carol McDaniel Memorial Nest Boxes available if you are willing to pay for shipping.

Restock. Now is when you can stock up on needed items, plus try some new ones. I start with checking my supply of conduit clamps and screws, as well as double-headed nails to hold doors in place.

Besides wood filler and drywall screws, I make sure I have the right size and type drill bits and driver heads. Look through your trailing backpack to make sure other essentials, such as permethrin spray, are all there.

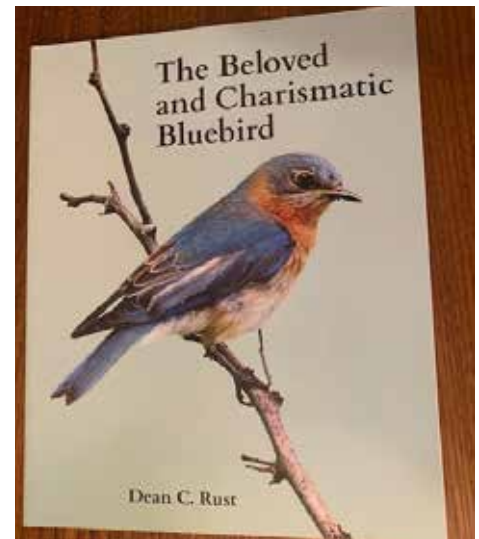
You might consider buying a natural ant repellent like Sapphire Labs Nectar Fortress or vanilla scent trees for warding off gnats and black flies. Check out a local Habitat Restore outlet for good deals on wood, hardware and fasteners, or try Farm & Fleet or online for other items mentioned.

If you need some predator guards, contact President Steve for free ones courtesy of our Trail Builder Program. He might ask for a donation to cover shipping.

Relearn: We all can learn something new or relearn some routine things that will help us tweak or perfect our trails and box management. Personally, I want to learn a bit more about box ventilation.

First, go to www.braw.org as there is a wealth of information here, as well as archived back issues of the *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter that have informative articles.

Other Wisconsin specific sites include



The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird book by Dean C. Rust is a great winter read and holiday gift. Best new price of \$29 found at www.SuperGourd.com.

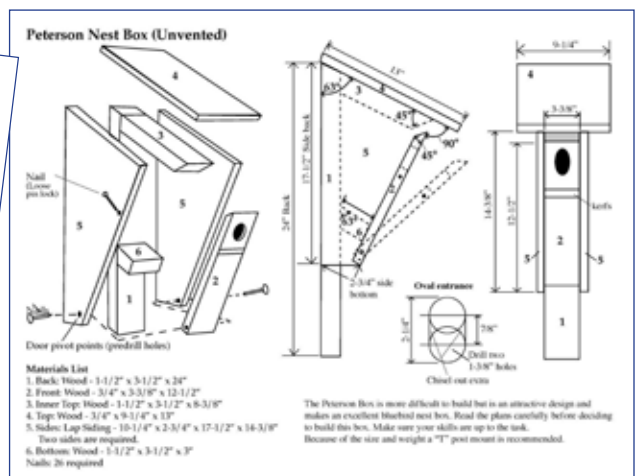
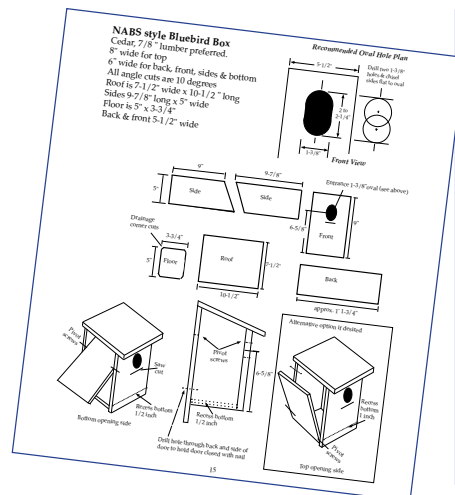
the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology at www.wsobirds.org, the Madison Audubon Society at www.madisonaudubon.org, Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership at www.wisconsinbirds.org, and the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association at www.wisconsinpurplemartins.org.

Second check out Eastern Bluebird and other national bird related websites, such as the North American Bluebird Society at www.nabluebird-society.org, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at www.birds.cornell.edu/home/ and Sialus at www.sialus.org.

I didn’t mention Rest and Recuperate as most of us already appreciate the value of these activities after a busy season of trailing. However, in case you are looking for more winter warm-up work, check out the “To Do List” heading at www.braw.org.

Build a Nest Box!

Winter is a good time to get into your shop and build a nest box or two or three! Go to braw.org and search “Nest boxes” to get detailed PDF downloadable instructions for how to make a NABS Style box or a Peterson box. Mount it in Spring for a returning pair of Eastern Bluebirds!



BRAW Photo Contest

Honorable Mentions

Once again we had over 30 entries in the contest. Another difficult task for the judges at The Camera Company in Madison. These here were not winners but definitely worth mentioning.



Mary Blanke, Elkhart Lake, WI



Joan Eckhardt, Beaufort County, SC



Paula Avelleyra, Madison, WI

Wisconsin Bluebird



Margaret Rakin Riley, Cross Plains, WI



Richard Albert, Mequon, WI



Pam Campbell, Dunn County, WI

**Plan to enter the BRAW
2023 Photo Contest!**

Membership Renewal Information

By Valerie Van Winkle, Membership Services

If the address label of your *Wisconsin Bluebird* newsletter reads Winter 2022 next to your name, then your membership expires this month and you need to renew immediately. If you are an online member, you won't see this clue so please consider marking the expiration date on your calendar when you sign up. We don't want you to miss a single newsletter!

The next issue of the *Wisconsin Bluebird* goes into production in February and will be mailed in March. Memberships received after February 15 may not be processed in time to receive the Spring newsletter. Consider an extended or one-time \$300 Life Membership.

Please fill out the membership renewal form on this page and send it with your check or money order to: **BRAW, Inc., Valerie Van Winkle, PO Box 628492, Middleton, WI 53562.**

You can also renew your membership at www.braw.org and use PayPal or a credit card.

BRAW, Inc. Membership and Wisconsin Bluebird Subscription

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

- \$10 Gift Annual Membership (Online subscription)
- \$15 Student/Teacher Annual Membership (Online subscription)
- \$20 Online Annual Membership
- \$40 Extended Online Annual Membership for 2 years
- \$60 Extended Online Annual Membership for 3 years
- \$25 Individual or Family Annual Membership (Printed copy mailed)
- \$75 Extended Individual or Family Annual Membership for 3 years (Printed copy mailed)
- \$100 Corporate Annual Membership
- \$300 Life Membership

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

*Email Address: _____

Telephone: () _____

County of residence: _____

*BRAW sends out nest box deal promotions and "time to renew" reminders via email.

Donation (optional)

\$15 for nest box construction/post & predator guard

\$100 for nest box trail

\$_____ for bluebird research

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

(Contributions to BRAW are tax deductible.)

Check appropriate boxes:

This is a renewal

This is a new membership

This is a GIFT membership

Enclosed please find my check \$ _____

Mail this membership request to:

BRAW, Inc.
Valerie Van Winkle
PO Box 628492
Middleton, WI 53562

We do not share or sell BRAW's membership list.

If you have any questions, please contact Valerie at 847-302-5684 or ripvws@gmail.com.

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

Vice-president Brad Zinda, 6737 Pinelake Dr. #213, Madison WI 53719 • brad.zinda@gmail.com (term to 12/22)

Secretary Gene Kroupa, gkroupa@tds.net (term to 12/22)

Treasurer Joanie Haugen, 9773 Vermont Church Rd., Black Earth, WI 53515 • jlhcb@gmail.com (term to 12/24)

Director Steve Fallon, 974 Halcyon Days Ct., Oregon, WI 53575 • stevfall50@gmail.com (term to 12/23)

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

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

Director Mary Sobol, 5205 Broadhead St., McFarland WI 53558 • msobolontime@gmail.com (term to 12/22)

Director Mike Crawford, 817 5th St. Waunakee, WI 53539 608-213-1806 • mike@marieandmike.com (term to 2023)

Director Patrick Ready, (Past President) 815 Sky Ridge Dr., Madison, WI 53719 • 608/239-0791 • birdsready@gmail.com (term to 12/23)

Directors Fred & Mary Craig, 3308 Nathan Lane, Holmen WI 54636 • 608/783-2225 • 266marycraig@gmail.com (term to 12/23)

Director Andy Garcia-Rivera, 10 Darien Circle, Madison, WI 53717 • agarciarivera@gmail.com

Director Gail Smith, Middleton, WI 53562 • gsmithbird@gmail.com

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County Coordinator Chair: Gene Birr, 3698 Morgan Marsh Rd Oconto Falls, WI 54154 • 920-373-2551 • gbbird22@gmail.com

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WI Bluebird Editor: Patrick Ready (see above)

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

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

Shop the BRAW Online Store for the holidays!

Items ordered by December 13 should arrive by December 24. Ho-Ho-Ho!

Check out the new BRAW Online Store! T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and lots more all with the BRAW logo on them. Items can be ordered online at <https://stores.inksoft.com/brawstore/shop/products/all?page=1>



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The mission and purpose of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc. is to broaden the base of state residents to help Eastern Bluebirds and native cavity nesters by erecting, maintaining and monitoring nest boxes.

Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin

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You Can Still Send in Your 2022 Data

See page 3

Check the address label. If it says "Winter 2022",
then you need to RENEW membership now.

BRAW 2022 Photo Contest 2nd Place

Todd Nelson
Racine, WI



BRAW 2022 Photo Contest 3rd Place

Gail Smith
Middleton, WI

Thanks to Tim and the crew at
The Camera Company in Madison
for judging the photos.

