



An Affiliate of NABS
 Mission: To increase
 the population of
 bluebirds and other
 native cavity-nesting
 birds through
 the promotion of
 bluebird awareness
 among concerned
 citizens.

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The BANner

Volume 26, No. 1 | February 2019

BAN bevy nailed it!

Hands-on seminar at Ponca State Park gives BAN unique exposure

By Joanie Cradick

Six BAN members recently headed to Ponca State Park to build nest boxes with other women at the Ponca-sponsored Women's Wellness Weekend. Although 55 women signed up to build boxes and learn about bluebirds, stormy weather reduced attendees to 45.

Several weeks prior to the event, each piece of the 60 seven-piece box kits supplied for the event by BAN was cut, labeled and numbered to aide box builders in assembling their box. Leland Osten provided step-by-step photos of the building process and Sandy Seibert incorporated the photos into an easy-to-follow assembly instruction sheet. Two practice box-building sessions were held prior to the event. The box pieces were then bundled into individual kits — including an individual packet of necessary nails and screws — and a sufficient number of hammers and power drills were rounded up.

The day before the event, Steve Eno loaded his truck and delivered the bundle of kits and supplies, along with pieces of 3/4-inch plywood large enough to protect the park's tables, where the women would be working. From that point on, the



Photo courtesy: Sarah Mueller



Photo courtesy: Lynn Mellick

box-building event was in the hands of the BAN women.

BAN President Sandy Seibert presented an interesting and informative bluebird PowerPoint program during which she emphasized the importance of monitoring each of the boxes being built that afternoon. Others helping with the event included Mary Carlson, Joanie Cradick, Cheryl Eno, Sarah Mueller and Connie Stentz.

Participants dug right in after Sandy's talk. Hammers pounded; most nails went in straight. A few bent ones that had to be pulled. Everyone seemed to pay attention to ensure the smooth sides faced inward.

Our group was prepared for the unexpected with extra kits, and it wasn't long before some of those were put to good use. There were split boards when a nail hit a knot, and sometimes there was no going back when a board was attached incorrectly. Then, there were times when a nail would not go in straight, but a few bent

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SAVE THE DATE

NABS Conference March 12-15, 2020 Kearney, Nebraska

Join Bluebird friends for the migration to the 2020 North American Bluebird Society Conference in Kearney, Nebraska! This exciting and educational event will be hosted by Bluebirds Across Nebraska.

Speakers include:

- All Batt of Hartland, Minnesota
- Bernie Daniel of Cincinnati, Ohio
- Myrna Pearman of Red Deer, Alberta, Canada
- Stan Tekiela of Eden Prairie, Minnesota
- Julie Zickefoose of Whipple, Ohio
- A Sandhill Crane speaker TBD

Planned activities include: Sandhill Crane viewing blinds, Prairie Chicken Leks and rainwater basin waterfowl viewing areas, prairie culture tour, workshops, exhibits, silent auction, raffle and time to socialize with birding friends.

Note: BAN will not be presenting our annual conference this spring as our team of conference planners are busy making preparations for NABS 2020. With an event of this magnitude, volunteers will be needed for various events and venues. Contact Sandy Seibert if you want to help at wseibert2@cox.net

NABS seeks new board members

The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is seeking volunteers to fill one or more positions on its board of directors, and they have asked us, as a NABS affiliate, to publicize this opportunity to our membership. NABS Board members are required to be or become NABS members. The NABS Board uses a committee structure to execute its business functions, and the committees are listed in each issue

of the NABS Bluebird journal. Board members are expected to participate in one or more of the committees. The NABS Board meets monthly via a one-hour teleconference call. If you are interested in joining the NABS Board, or if you need more information before making your decision, please contact NABS Board President Bernie Daniel by phone at 513-300-8714 or by email at bdaniel@nabluebirdsociety.org.

Annual scholarship available

Tuition, books, lodging and parking fees — and these are on top of all life's other expenses! For a college student, every little bit of support helps. For this reason, BAN's annual John Dinan Memorial Scholarship, now in the amount of \$500, is available for 2019 graduating seniors.

In addition, BAN has established

a \$500 Sharon Holliday memorial scholarship, which will be awarded to a qualifying applicant pursuing a degree in education. Sharon was a longtime active BAN member and well-respected teacher at Lincoln Northeast High School.

To be chosen, a recipient must be a current BAN member or related to

one. Applications can be downloaded at bbne.org, or one can be mailed to you. To request a copy, write to Steve Eno, 2500 West James Drive, Raymond, NE 68428, or email your request to info@bbne.org with "scholarship application" in the subject.

The deadline for submitting applications is April 1.

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ones took a second try.

We had custom-made jigs to ease the building process. However, even though one builder had put the jig in correctly before attaching the floor, when she tried to remove it, it was in so tight she couldn't get it out. Sandy also pulled and struggled to get the jig out with her tools. Finally, using a miniature crowbar supplied by her husband, Bill, she was able to get the jig out.

Many participants told us they had fun.



Photo courtesy: Sarah Mueller

TOP 10 tips for successful bluebirding

1 Commitment. Commit to opening and checking the contents of your nest boxes at least once a week during the nesting season. Keep written records of what you find. Weekly checking identifies problems and determines the success or failure of each location to attract and fledge bluebirds. Do not install nest boxes if you cannot make this commitment.

2 Habitat. Select habitat in an open area, at least 300 feet from brush. Place the nest box in short or mowed grass with nearby perching sites: overhead wires, pasture fencing or a standing dead tree. Bluebirds prefer high ground rather than wetland area.

3 The right nest boxes. Select a durable, waterproof nest box. The ideal size for a round entrance hole is 1 9/16 inch. The box must be easy to open for regular checking and cleaning. The Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota (BBRP)-recommended boxes include the Gilbertson, PVC, Gilwood and Peterson. All boxes should be installed with proper mounting.

4 Proper mounting. First, have the site checked for underground utilities. BBRP recommends mounting nest boxes on 1/2-inch metal electrical conduit over 1/2-inch rebar. The entrance hole should be 5 to 6 feet above the ground, facing a tree, not a road or highway. To eliminate climbing predators, never mount on trees, fences, wooden posts or steel fence posts without baffles.

5 Spacing. Space nest boxes at least 1,000 feet apart. Overloading an area with nest boxes may result in increased populations of competitive birds, such as House Wrens and tree swallows. This can cause problems in future years.

6 Welcome chickadees and tree swallows. Allow nest boxes to be used by native cavity nesters, such as black-capped chickadees and tree swallows. If tree swallows are competing with bluebirds, try pairing two nest boxes 10-15 feet apart, with at least 1,000 feet to the next pair.

7 Dealing with House Sparrows and House Wrens. The nests and eggs of House Sparrows must be removed. These are not native to this country and are an enemy of bluebirds. If you cannot deal with House Sparrows, do not install bluebird nest boxes. Avoid placing boxes where House Sparrows are abundant — near livestock farms or within cities. The PVC nest box is the most sparrow-resistant. To avoid possible retaliation, do not remove the sparrow nest if bluebirds are nesting in the

paired nest box until bluebirds have fledged. House Wrens have become a problem for all cavity-nesting birds. These sweet-singing little birds poke holes in other birds' eggs, carry out nestlings and take over boxes by filling them with sticks. Avoid brushy areas where house wrens are likely to reside. Do not place bluebird nest boxes in House Wren habitat.

8 Nest checks. Open the nest boxes to check contents until the nestlings are 12 days old. Check after a heavy rain for wet nests, which should be replaced with dry grass. Keep blow-fly larvae out of the box. Remove a dead nestling immediately. Remove old nests after young have fledged and before the second nesting begins. After the nesting season, if House Sparrows are in the area, leave the door of wooden boxes open and close the entrance hole of PVC boxes. This practice also eliminates mice from inhabiting the boxes during winter. In spring, open PVC holes and close doors on wooden boxes mid to late March.

9 Keep bluebirds safe. Volunteer to help move, remove or remount boxes that are poorly placed and/or improperly mounted. This may be as important as installing new boxes to help the bluebird population. Boxes mounted on trees, wooden posts or steel fence posts without baffles provide easy access for raccoons or cats. Boxes in trees, in wetland areas and by livestock farms produce mostly competitors to bluebirds, such as House Wrens, tree swallows and House Sparrows.

10 Report your results. Send in your nesting season's results to a bluebird organization that publishes the year-end results. Share your experiences and encourage others to follow these tips so bluebirds will be here for future generations. Become a member and support your local bluebird organization.

— *Information reprinted from the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota.*



Know Your Officers!

Each of BAN's dedicated, long-time officers agreed to serve another term and was re-elected at the 2018 conference. However, each current officer would like to find an interested member to step up and take on a leadership role. In addition, we're also looking for someone to take over our newsletter effort. Please consider helping BAN continue to be a leading bluebird conservation organization by taking an active role in its leadership.



From left, Vice President Mike Lowe, President Sandy Seibert, Treasurer Elva Osten and Secretary Joanie Cradick

Unattended, unmonitored boxes are a danger to bluebirds

Whether you have one bluebird nest box in your yard or an extensive trail, you've taken on a responsibility. Setting up a bluebird nest box or establishing a trail is much more than merely selecting a box style, placing it in good habitat and letting nature take its course.

Some people would argue that it's not natural to monitor nest boxes, interfere with what type of inhabitant lives or does not live inside, and we should not disrupt the natural course of events. The truth is that nature was disrupted by mankind long ago and things will never be entirely "natural" again. There is nothing natural about a House Sparrow. They were introduced to America less than 200 years ago and have since become the most abundant songbird on the continent. Bluebirds once nested in cavities in trees that were created by woodpeckers. As human development spread, these trees and natural nesting cavities were destroyed. House Sparrows and European starlings (another non-native species) competed with the bluebird for natural cavities.



Photo courtesy: Leland Osten

Establishing and monitoring a bluebird trail is not about what's natural. It's about the "survival" of our beautiful native bluebird. Bluebirds today are dependant upon their human benefactors to not only provide them with a proper home, but to also monitor and care for that home so they can safely raise their family in it. Simply put, anyone who puts out a bluebird box is taking on a responsibility and needs to take that responsibility seriously.

Many bad things can happen inside of an unattended and unmonitored bluebird nest box. The house itself may split

or rot, allowing cold and rain to enter. House Sparrows may take up residence, attack bluebird chicks, destroy eggs and even kill nesting adult bluebirds. House Wrens may fill up unattended boxes with sticks, making them unusable by the bluebird. Wrens also may pierce bluebird eggs and remove young chicks from the nest. Mice can take over boxes and fill them with their own nesting material. Insects, such as wasps and ants, can invade boxes and drive bluebirds away. Blowfly larvae can suck the blood of young bluebirds.

Mice, squirrels and woodpeckers may enlarge the entrance holes, allowing starlings to take up residence or making it easier for predators to gain access to bluebird eggs and chicks. Unhatched eggs can break and nestlings can die, decay, and attract pests and predators. Unattended boxes also provide nesting sites for competing species to raise their young. Nothing positive for the bluebird will occur within a box that is not monitored. If you have or know of unattended bluebirds boxes, please take them down. The bluebird will benefit in the long term by having more well-monitored nesting sites than unmonitored ones. If you enjoy building boxes but do not wish to monitor them, consider donating the boxes to your local bluebird organization or others who will see that they are properly monitored.

If you have a friend or neighbor with unattended boxes, invite them to come along with you when you monitor your trail and help them experience the thrill of watching bluebirds successfully raise their chicks. If they still do not wish to monitor their boxes, encourage them to either take them down or allow you to monitor them.

Bluebird success will not be determined by the number of nest boxes we put up, but rather the quality of the monitoring program used by the nest box owner. One well-placed and well-monitored nest box will benefit the bluebird significantly more than 100 unattended ones.

— From *The Bluebird Flyer*, Spring 2011, reprinted with permission of the Bluebird Recovery Association of Wisconsin.

From the editor

Each issue of the BANner includes an invitation to you, our members, to contact us with questions, comments, concerns or “error advisories.”

A special thank you goes out to the member who took the time to question the failure to share information about

BAN’s 2018 annual conference following the event. It was a very valid point — albeit embarrassing on my part — as it was simply a “major oversight.” While a full post-conference recap has not been included in the BANner for many years, BAN’s annual Bluebirder of the Year and the recipient of BAN’s annual scholarship — which are highlighted below — should have been recognized in the June 2018 issue.

Marvin Oltman named Bluebirder of the Year

Marvin Oltman was recognized as the 2017 Bluebirder of the Year in recognition of his dedication to BAN’s ongoing box-building efforts, his longtime monitoring of the successful bluebird trail located adjacent to Nine Mile Prairie in Lincoln, and for being the “just tell me what needs to be done and I’ll do it” volunteer.



P.S. from the editor: In addition to questions, comments, concerns and “error advisories,” please share anything interesting, educational, unusual, fun or odd that you experience or question on any of your bluebird monitoring treks. Stories, questions, photos, drawings, thoughts and ideas from fellow BAN members are fun to read and inspiring to new and old bluebirders alike.

Carin Mellick receives memorial scholarship

Carin Mellick of Waterbury, Nebraska, was the 2018 recipient of BAN’s John Dinan/Sharon Holliday Memorial Scholarship.

Since last spring, Carin began her undergraduate career as a freshman at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she had been accepted into UNL’s pre-veterinary medicine program, along with the honors program. In high school, Carin was involved in her community and hopes to use her college-gained skills to take her involvement to new levels. She sees herself giving back with animal wellness clinics, providing services that owners and organizations couldn’t otherwise afford.

We wish Carin continued success in her studies and future goals.



Online reporting proves popular among members

Submitted by Jeanne Johnson - Social Media Chair

We are excited to report that nearly 100 people — a little less than half of those responding — completed the BAN 2018 Report Form online!

While we appreciate every report, those who reply using the online form enable us to quickly upload the information and calculate results. Because each report can be

converted together into an Excel document, there is no chance for error.

Of the 94 BAN’rs who used the online form, 1,668 boxes were monitored, 6,249 eggs were laid and 4,465 babies fledged. Thirteen of the respondents encountered problems with House Wrens, the most-mentioned issue this year.

BAN’s 2018 Bluebird Nesting Statistics are now available on line at www.bbne.org.

Getting others started in bluebirding

As important and enjoyable as it is for you to have a successful bluebird trail, it is just as important, or more so, to get new people started in bluebirding. Only with a large number of people working to help the bluebird will their numbers continue to increase. This is why we need to share our knowledge and excitement about bluebirding with others. I'm sure everyone can remember that special feeling the first time they had bluebirds nest. By helping others, you may relive that experience many times over through phone calls and conversations with people who tell you, "I've got bluebirds."

Finding new bluebirders

It's always good to be on the lookout for people who would be willing to take on a new bluebird trail. If you know or hear of someone who has that ideal spot for a bluebird trail, talk to that person about the rewards of bluebirding and see if they would be willing to monitor a trail if you set it up for them. It's important to create interest in what you and BAN are doing in your area. Below are suggestions on how this can be done.

- 1 Create awareness.** This may take some time. Put up bluebird boxes in areas with high visibility, such as long highways, well-traveled county roads, parks, golf courses, etc. People will be curious about what the boxes are doing there. Even more attention will be drawn to your efforts when bluebirds are seen checking out and using the boxes.
- 2 Workshops.** Very few people like to speak in public, but almost any bluebirder can talk to a small group of interested people about bluebirds. Your presentation can be as informal or formal as you would like to make it, and you always have the option of using slides or video. Even if the groups for these workshops are small, if one or two people get hooked, it's well worth your time.
- 3 Newspaper articles.** Most weekly newspapers are looking for human interest stories. Bluebirds or the people working to help them are always of interest. Make sure your name and address or a phone number appears in the article. Be sure to mention BAN as well.
- 4 Name recognition.** Whether you like it or not, you will eventually be known as the "Bluebird Man/Lady," "Mr./Mrs. Bluebird" or "the Bluebird Nut" in your area. You also will find that people in small communities start sharing their bluebird experiences with others and your name will be part of their conversations.

5 Local groups/organizations. Local organizations, such as 4-H, Scouts, garden clubs, Audubon chapters and senior citizen groups, may be interested in establishing a bluebird trail. Senior citizens usually have the most time and are dependable for monitoring trails. You should be aware that many youth groups will build the boxes, put them up, and then never monitor the trails.

Choosing the right location

When someone calls you for help on setting up a new bluebird trail, more than likely they will have an area in mind where they'd like to set up their trail. Almost everyone wants bluebirds close to where they live so they can see them regularly. While it would be wonderful if everyone had an ideal habitat for bluebirds right outside of their window or just down the drive, that may not be the case. It will be up to you to advise the new bluebirder on the importance of box location — even the best box monitored daily probably will not attract bluebirds if it's in a bad location. But lack of habitat shouldn't be the end of their bluebird trail aspirations. Maybe their neighbor has a section of pasture land that is ideal bluebird habitat. Encourage them to get permission to put up a bluebird trail on that property. Very seldom are people turned down.

For those who want to experience bluebirding but live in an area where there is no chance of attracting bluebirds, other options are available. Trails are often set up on golf courses, in parks, along hiking/biking trails or, again, pastureland is always ideal.

Setting up the trail and monitoring

It is best to start people off with a small number of boxes rather than to overwhelm them with a large bluebird trail. Monitoring a bluebird trail is a commitment that must be taken seriously. If a person finds they are not able to check even a couple of boxes regularly, there is no reason for a large trail.

You might want to take a new bluebirder out with you on your trail walk. It's hard to beat hands-on experience. Another idea is to give an interested person part of your bluebird trail to walk for a season

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Have you had a change of address?

If you have moved, changed from a box number to a street address, or have your mail forwarded for several months, please let us know. Under bulk mailing restrictions, the Postal Service does not forward newsletters, but returns them to BAN with postage due. If the return notice has a new address, BAN then sends your newsletter to the correct address with the additional required postage. Please contact Membership Chair Sandy Seibert, 2115 South 114th Street, Omaha, NE 68144 or email us at info@bbne.org if this applies to you. Your help in keeping our costs down is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Is it time to renew?

Take a moment to check the date above your name and address on Page 8. If your membership has expired, please renew today. Your continued support is appreciated.

BAN membership | Renewal form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

County _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Please check if you have had a change of address or phone.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year	\$10
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 years	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporation - 1 year	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional tax-deductible donation \$ _____	

We are a 501 (c) (3) organization

**Please mail this membership form and your tax-deductible contribution to:
Membership, BAN, P.O. Box 67157, Lincoln, NE 68506-7157**

Getting others started in bluebirding

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to find out if they want to set up a trail of their own. Experiencing that first-time success is important, so this might be helpful.

Point out to new bluebirders that it's not the quantity of boxes, but the quality of their location and frequent monitoring that makes a trail successful.

Additional tips and ideas

- Keep in touch with the new bluebirders you have helped get started. Encourage them to call you with any questions, problems and success stories they may have.



Photo courtesy: Leland Osten

- Whenever possible, go out and help the new bluebirder put up new boxes. It's much easier to show them where to put the boxes than to assume they will put them in good locations.
- Be sure the new bluebirder receives some recognition. Give them a report form, explain how it works and encourage them to send it in. Let them know their report will be shared on BAN's website in the annual Nesting Statistics Report.
- Inform people about possible problems on the trail, such as House Sparrows, wrens, raccoons, etc., but don't be too negative.
- Encourage family participation. It's a great family project — from building boxes to putting them up and monitoring.
- You will more than likely be asked a lot of questions, so be familiar with the frequently asked questions sheet available on BAN's website at bbne.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions.

Need advice? | Have questions?

Where should I put my nest box? What kind of bird built this nest? Do I need to monitor my box?

Having a problem with sparrows, wrens or raccoons? CALL YOUR COORDINATOR – THEY CAN HELP! You can find your county coordinator at bbne.org under the "Resources" tab.

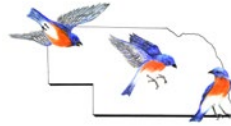
Welcome | new members

Nebraska: Dorothy Manes, Beatrice; Michael Cheever, Bennet; Cheryl Powers, Lincoln; Debra Golter, Orchard; Jerry Damme, Papillion; Kevin Stelle, Raymond; Robin Schelstraete, Crete; **Florida:** Sandy Scott, Wauchula; **Illinois:** Mitch Feucht, Lanark; **Iowa:** Deanna Viner, Red Oak; Lois & Jerry Kramer, Dyersville; **Washington:** Charles Van Delden, Kettle Falls



Members: We want to hear from you!

You can always contact us with success stories, questions, comments, concerns or "error advisories" via email at info@bbne.org. We will respond to all emails received! Or write to us at P.O. Box 67157, Lincoln, NE 68506-7157.



Bluebirds Across Nebraska

P.O. Box 67157
Lincoln, NE 68506-7157

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Thanks for your donations!

Gordon Hopp delivers food donations gathered during BAN's annual Christmas party to Countryside Bank in Unadilla in December. Photo courtesy: Jennifer Gee of Countryside Bank

Calendar of events | Mark your calendar and save the date

2019

Note: No annual conference in 2019: See Page 2 for more information.

Feb. 17

BAN winter potluck meeting at Roca Community Center, 15545 B St., Roca; 1 p.m. potluck followed by 2 p.m. meeting.

April 6

Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota Annual Expo in Cannon Falls, Minn., visit www.bbrp.org for more information.

June 1

Purple Martin Open House – Ivan Ray Miller hosts this annual event in Jamesport, Mo., more information in the Spring issue of *The BANNER*.

July 12-14

Missouri Bluebird Society annual conference in the St. Louis area. See www.missouribluebird.wordpress.com for more information.

2020

March 12-15 BAN will host the North American Bluebird Society's 2020 National Convention in conjunction with our own annual state conference in Kearney, Nebraska, during the annual Sandhill Crane migration.

Bluebirds Across Nebraska | Board of Directors

President	Sandy Seibert	2115 S. 114th St., Omaha, NE 68144	402-334-8691
Vice President	Mike Lowe	2500 Lafayette Ave., Lincoln, NE 68502	402-423-3000
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County Coordinator Program	Bill Seibert	2115 S. 114th St., Omaha, NE 68144	402-334-8691
Fundraising	Steve Eno	2500 West James Drive, Raymond, NE 68428	402-783-3011
Membership	Sandy Seibert	2115 S. 114th St., Omaha, NE 68144	402-334-8691
Social Media	Jeanne Johnson	jmjohnson4047@gmail.com	402-215-3988
Newsletter	Cheryl Eno	2500 West James Drive, Raymond, NE 68428	402-783-3011