



The Fledgling

The official newsletter of the Missouri Bluebird Society

Spring, 2026
Celebrating 20 Years!



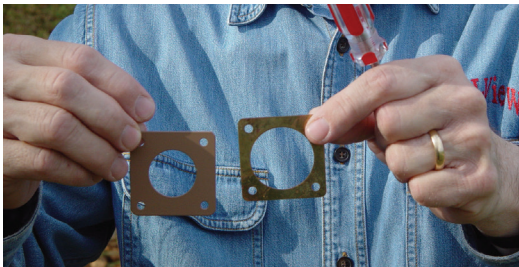
Letter From the President:

Dear MOBS members,

As we all begin our 2026 cavity nester season routines and make plans for our nest boxes and trails this year, be sure you include plans to attend **the 2026 Missouri Bluebird Conference July 17th-19th in Jamesport**. Generously hosted by longtime MOBS members Ivan Ray and Anna May Miller and family, this year's 20th Anniversary Conference is sure to be extra special! Of course, we will have programs on Bluebirds, but also other native cavity-nesting birds. You will be treated to programs on Prothonotary Warblers, Purple Martins and American Kestrels.

One program I am particularly looking forward to is a special preview of the location of our **Sunday Morning Bird Walk and Brunch** at the Miller family's cabin in Jamesport. This is a special place that has been lovingly and carefully designed to preserve the beauty and fascination of a natural setting. That includes native birds, but also other native wildlife and wildflowers. Ivan Ray is going to share with us his vision, efforts and achievements at this site. And then Sunday morning we all get to experience it!

But for now, it is time to ready our boxes for the nesting season. Look over your records from last year and refresh your memory on your plans for this year. One piece of equipment I always keep handy when monitoring boxes (**especially** early in the season) is a Chickadee-sized (1 1/8 inch) metal nest box portal to place over the entrance hole of any nest box I find with a verified chickadee nest in it. This protects the Chickadee from



harassment by House Sparrows and larger birds. As soon as the Chickadees have fledged, the portal can be removed to allow Bluebirds, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wrens, Tree Swallows, Nuthatches, and maybe Prothonotary Warblers to nest.

Do what you can to help the Bluebirds (and the other native cavity nesters too!).

Steve Garr

President, Missouri Bluebird Society

Inside:

Letter From the President:	1
20 th Anniversary MOBS Conference	2
Member News	4
What's That?	5
Activity With the Kids:	5
Anyone Can Do Bluebird Outreach	6
Editor Asks...	7
Missouri's First Bluebird Trail	8
Case Study: 1 Nest, 9 Eggs	10
2025 Nesting Report	12

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The Missouri Bluebird Society
is an Affiliate of the North
American Bluebird Society.

20th Anniversary MOBS Conference

When: July 17th - 19th

Where:

Spillman Event Center
308 Broadway St.
Jamesport, MO



The Missouri Bluebird Society's annual conference is heading to Jamesport, Missouri with additional activities at the home and the cabin of the Ivan Ray Miller family! All meals and special events are graciously hosted by the Millers!

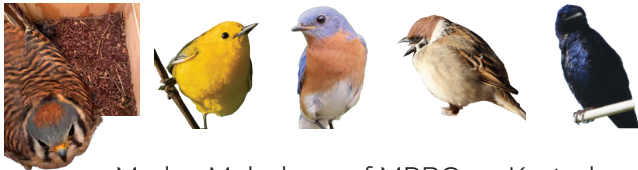
This year's events promise conservation insights, field-tested wisdom, and the kind of bird conversations you just can't have anywhere else.

Thank you Ivan Ray Miller, Anna May Miller, and family for generously hosting MOBS' 20th Anniversary Conference!

Friday Evening Events

Held at the Spillman Center in Jamesport, Ivan Ray will present a program at the Bluebird Banquet about his property where we are having the Sunday morning bird walk and brunch!

Saturday Presentations



- Marlee Malmborg of MRBO on Kestrels.
- Ron Darling on Prothonotary Warblers.
- Katharine Martin on Eurasian Tree Sparrows.
- Jack Corrigan on "Bluebird Basics."
- Ivan Ray Miller on Purple Martins.

There will also be a brief program about entering 2026 nesting data online as well as a short refresher program on Identifying Nest "Starts" in nest boxes. Lunch is included in your registration for Saturday programs.

Attendees will also enjoy our annual Silent Auction/Raffle (MOBS' only fundraiser of the year) throughout the day.

Saturday Night Outing

Enjoy a cookout at the Miller home with dinner and fellowship on the front porch: Open fire burgers and other food by Anna May Miller and family.

Sunday Morning Bird Walks and Brunch

The events on Sunday morning begin at 8:30 a.m., with the bird walk led by MOBS' own Terry McNeely, and brunch at the Miller Cabin.



Local Accommodations:

Comfort Inn & Suites	250 Business 36, Chillicothe 660-646-9900
Fairfield Inn & Suites	220 W Business 36, Chillicothe 660-646-3100
Super 8	580 E Business 36, Chillicothe 660-646-7888
Country Colonial B&B	106 E. Main St, Jamesport 660-684-6711
Red Barn Getaway Countryside Home	Chillicothe (2 night min.)
Meneely Guest House	1115 Fair St, Chillicothe 660-752-5467
Countryside RV Park	106 East 2nd St, Jamesport 660-684-63291

Thank you to Regina Garr for putting all of this information and the forms together!



The Missouri Bluebird Society invites you to attend the
2026 Missouri Bluebird Conference July 17th– 19th

Spillman Event Center 308 S. Broadway Jamesport, MO 64648

Directions to Spillman Event Center: **660-684-6146** or go to:
<https://www.northwestmoinfo.com/venue/spillman-event-center/>

Additional events will be held at the Ivan Ray and Anna May Miller Family Home and Cabin in Jamesport, MO
For Conference info: Contact Ivan Ray Miller 660-684-6563. For Registration info: Steve/Regina at 573-638-2473

Registration for the 2026 Missouri Bluebird Society Conference

Please make Checks payable to: The Missouri Bluebird Society

And mail to: Missouri Bluebird Society/ P.O. BOX 105830 /Jefferson City, MO 65110

Deadline to register 7/3/26

Name(s) _____

Street Address : _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ Email : _____

Registration for Saturday Presentations includes lunch and a “Bluebird Information Packet”. There is an optional Friday evening “Bluebird Banquet” including dinner, an informative program, and the “Bluebirds and Friends” slide show. There is also an optional Saturday evening Cook Out at the home of Ivan Ray and Anna May Miller. Please also join us Sunday Morning (7/19/26) for Bird Walks and Brunch at the Miller family cabin . All venues are within 2-3 miles of the Spillman Event Center.

Longtime MOBS members Ivan Ray and Anna May Miller and family have graciously volunteered to provide delicious home cooked meals at all events at the 2026 conference. We thank them!

Friday evening Bluebird Banquet (Program with dinner included) **7/17/26**

(member) _____ X \$30.00/person \$ _____

(non-member) _____ X \$35.00/person \$ _____

Saturday, 7/18/26 Conf. Presentations -Lunch included. (member) _____ X \$25.00/person \$ _____

(non-member) _____ X \$30.00/person \$ _____

7/18/26 Children under 12 years of age with a paid adult (total children) _____ X \$14.00/ child =\$ _____

Saturday evening Cookout 7/18/26 at Miller Family Home

(members/ non-members) _____ X \$10.00/person \$ _____

Sunday Morning Bird Walks and Brunch 7/19/26 at Miller Family Cabin

members/ non-members) _____ X \$5.00/person \$ _____

TOTAL amount enclosed for all Conference fees \$ _____

Please indicate if you would like Vegetarian meals (y/n) How Many? _____

Deadline to register 7/3/26

Please Note that the conference registration fee does NOT include membership dues

Not yet a Missouri Bluebird Society Member? Join now & save on your Bluebird Conference

Registration Fee! (Please enclose check for dues with this membership application)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email: _____

Total \$ amount enclosed for **Membership Dues:** \$ _____

Membership Levels:

(Mail check to: PO Box 105830/Jefferson City, MO 65110)

Individual one year membership \$9.00

Individual two year membership \$16.00

Family one year membership \$15.00

Family two year membership \$28.00

DONOR (Annual) \$50.00

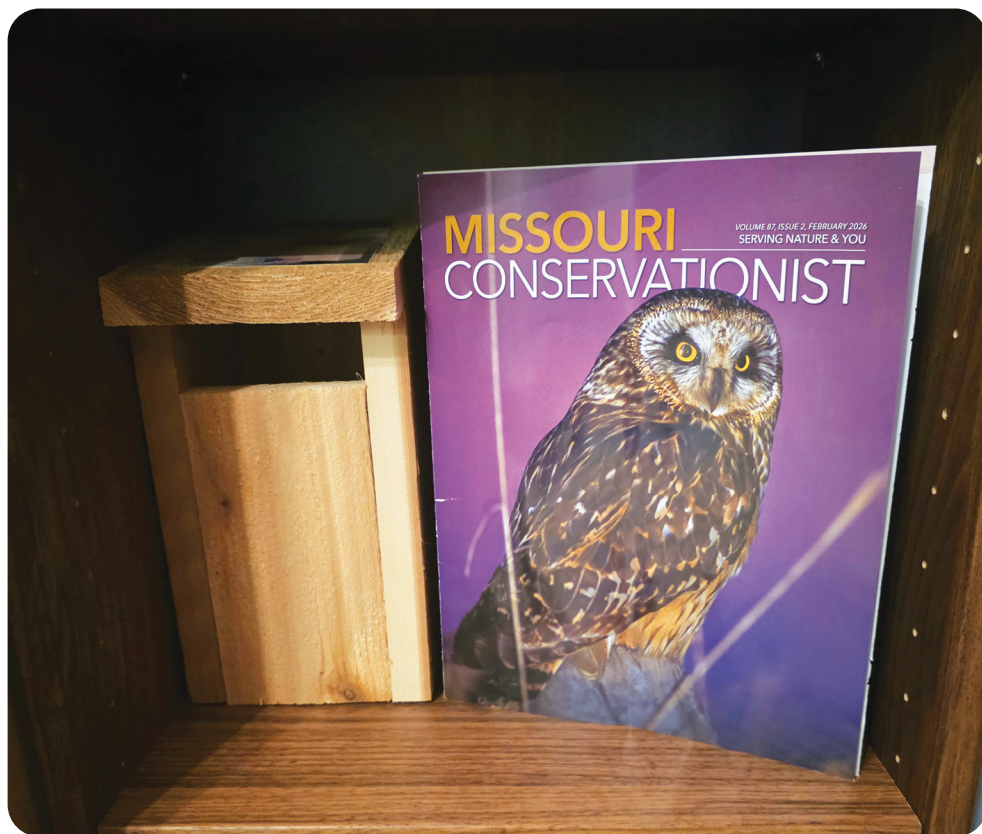
SUPPORTER (Annual) \$100.00

Life Membership (family) \$175.00

Senior (65+) Life Membership (family) \$100.00

County _____

Member News



| Front cover of the Missouri Conservationist Magazine featuring Jim Rathert's photograph of a short-eared owl.



| Mary Ann & Patrick Malloy helping install nest boxes at Veterans Tribute Park.

| Katharine Martin

The Missouri Bluebird Society community has been busy with a few milestones in the opening months of 2026, though the year immediately began with loss.

In Remembrance of Jeffrey Dean Pautz

Jeffrey Dean Pautz was a longtime MOBS member and familiar face at the Missouri Bluebird Conferences. Jeff passed away on January 3, 2026. Those who knew him remember his warmth, spirit and genuine enthusiasm for MOBS. He was always ready to lend a hand, share something he'd just learned, or strike up a friendly conversation. Jeff's contribution to the fall 2023 issue of the Fledgling showed what an amazing innovator he was by using plastic flower pots to help mount stovepipe baffles to T-posts.

We extend our deepest condolences to his family, and we are grateful for every moment he shared with this community. He will be greatly missed.

February's Missouri Conservationist Cover Photo

On a celebratory note, Board Member Jim Rathert's incredible photograph of a short-eared owl made the cover of the February issue of Missouri Conservationist magazine!

Honoring Two Members

Also in February, the Federated Garden Club of Missouri honored two of our own. Their board selected Ron Darling and Tricia Kephart as new sponsors of the club's annual award recognizing the most comprehensive program for bird welfare. Going forward, the award will carry their names as the Darling/Kephart Protection of Birds Award.

A New Trail Established

Finally, in early March, members in the St. Charles area worked together to set up a new trail at Veterans Tribute Park.

It has been an eventful start to 2026. Those with news or updates to share are encouraged to contact the editor at kmartinmobs@gmail.com.

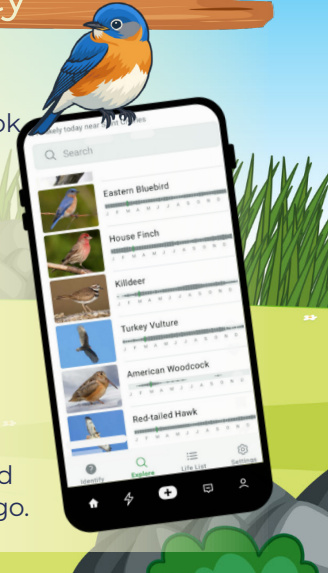
Activity With the Kids:

Birding By Ear Activity

You can help your kids level up their birding skills this season with birding by ear practice. Birds are usually heard before they're seen. Learning their sounds helps you know what to look for as you go.

Take a short walk around your neighborhood, the park, or a birding hot-spot. While you and the kids walk, use the free Merlin Bird ID app's Sound ID feature to identify birds by their songs and calls. Take a moment to recognize the sound, and then look at the picture and name of the bird.

Afterward, everyone can sit quietly in your backyard. Without looking for birds, write down how many different sounds you hear and who you think made those sounds. See if you guessed right by looking for the bird afterward. Or check Merlin as you go.



| Image created in Canva Pro

Membership Application and Renewals!

MOBS Membership Application/Renewal Form

Memberships expire on **December 31st of the year of expiration.**

Check your mailing label to see if you need to renew. (if your membership expires in "2026", it does not expire until Dec 31, 2026)

Feel free to contact Regina at regina@birds-i-view.biz or 573-638-2473 with questions about your membership status.

Please mail this form, along with your check or money order (payable to **MOBS**) to:

Missouri Bluebird Society/ P.O. Box 105830/ Jefferson City, MO 65110

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City/State _____ Zip _____

County: _____ Email: _____

Membership Levels:

____ Individual one year membership \$9.00 ____ DONOR (Annual) \$50.00 ____ *Family LIFE Membership \$175.00

____ Individual two year membership \$16.00 ____ SUPPORTER (Annual) \$100.00 ____ **Senior Life Membership \$100.00

____ *Family one year membership \$15.00

____ *Family two year membership \$28.00

*For individuals residing at the same address

**Is a family Life membership available to individuals 65 or older (family members must reside at this same address)

____ Mail me the quarterly newsletter ____ Save The Trees: Email me the quarterly newsletter

☐ This is a gifted membership Membership gifted by _____

First, Last Name

What's That? ►

Guess what this is a picture of!
Answer on page 10



| Courtesy of Ron Darling



Member Ron Darling giving a talk at the St. Charles Wild Birds Unlimited store.

Anyone Can Do Bluebird Outreach

| Katharine Martin (In collaboration with Ron Darling)

Bluebird outreach builds awareness, understanding, corrects misinformation, and invites others into stewardship. And it doesn't always require us to stand behind a podium in front of a bunch of people, though that is very helpful.

Outreach efforts can take on forms you may not have realized. It can be as simple as a bumper sticker sparking curiosity. Remember the old Missouri license plate with the bluebird on it? That's what did it for me. It can happen visually, or through storytelling. And it can be as small or big as you are comfortable with.

The reward is the exponential growth of stewardship and care for native cavity nesting species.

Start Where You're Comfortable

Many effective bluebird ambassadors never set out to be a speaker. Longtime member and experienced bluebird ambassador Ron Darling shared that years of talking about recycling and environmental issues naturally transitioned him into bluebird outreach once retirement opened up time.

Not everyone has that kind of experience. Instead, you might be an artist who shares your work on social media.

Some of you are parents and grandparents who can slowly plant the seeds of curiosity. Maybe you write songs or poems. Some of you are natural teachers who have become incredible mentors.

As your experience and expertise broaden, you may discover other avenues that you would have never considered early on.

Everyday, In the Moment Outreach

When I reached out to Ron for his insights into outreach, he reminded me that some of the most meaningful outreach happens informally. Wearing a bluebird hat or shirt invites conversation while on a trail. Monitoring a trail often leads to a curious passerby asking what you're doing. A simple line like "I'm checking bluebird nesting boxes, want to know more?" opens the door.

It's these moments that are also a lot easier for those of us who dread public speaking. Something like this feels very natural, and 20 minutes later you're still going on about the world of bluebirds. Maybe, don't talk too long though.

Small Groups, Big Impact

If large audiences feel intimidating, consider smaller settings. Lunch-and-learns at workplaces, garden clubs, libraries, or community groups create low-pressure environments. Admittedly, I was nervous on my first

lunch-and-learn event, and the host was a good friend of mine. But about 2 seconds in, the nerves settled, and I was on bluebird brain.

You could also organize small bird walks in your neighborhood or community. This is a great way to educate people about different species, and introduce them to a bluebird if you happen upon one.

Digital and Visual Outreach

Social media is outreach. Sharing the story of a nesting season, a chickadee pair, or a tree swallow box invites others into the journey. Think in story terms. What is happening? What went wrong? What changed? A photo of a predator baffle or a house sparrow with a clear visual cue can communicate instantly, with text adding clarity.

When doing storytelling, position your bird as a main character. Each little episode has the same story structure: inciting incident, rising action, climax, and resolution.

It could be as simple as posting a video of a bunch of hungry babies in a nest box. What does mom bring but a giant cicada. Can she get it in its mouth? Will the baby actually swallow it. He did! Whew that was a close one. Sometimes our stories have tragic endings too, and as hard as this is, it is very educational. You may want to give warnings or soften it for a broad audience though.

A Small Token Can Lead to a Journey



Griggsville, Illinois happens to be one of the purple martin capitals of the US. And this is thanks to Ben Westfall, Brian Fitzjarrald, and Tina Fitzjarrald keeping the legacy alive. Whenever I meet up with Brian and Tina, I always see Brian give out a wooden purple martin coin to a cashier, a server, a restaurant host, a little kid – anyone.

This little coin is an inexpensive way to open a quick conversation, one that might lead to a future generation of purple martin landlords. It is also a great lesson to us all. We can come up with our own little tokens to introduce people to our native cavity birds. Stickers, bumper stickers and magnets are also great options. Having something small, cheap and easy to carry means we have a gift and conversation at the ready.

Match the Message to the Audience

Not every audience needs the same information. Newcomers may need basics. Experienced bluebirders want nuance. Mixed groups benefit from questions up front to gauge experience. Whenever you open up a conversation, post on social media, or give a talk, consider your audience. Be mindful of the *curse of knowledge*, where you forget how much you might know compared to those who are just getting started. Define concepts and avoid acronyms.

Use Your Strengths

Outreach does not look the same for everyone. Artists, writers, photographers, organizers, and volunteers all contribute. Articles, flyers, event tables at native plant swaps, and conservation events all count. MOBS offers resources, handouts, and presentations to support these efforts.

Outreach can happen anywhere in any way. The key is showing up in a way that feels right for you.

Editor Asks...

Have answers to just one or even a few of these questions? If so, email the editor right away at kmartinmobs@gmail.com. Your expertise is worth sharing!

1. Do you manage a bluebird trail at a cemetery/graveyard?
2. What are your best tips for preventing or dealing with ticks while on the trail?
3. What are some important types of notes or observations to record during nest checks or in your field notes and why?
4. What is your favorite/go-to nest box style and why?
5. What are your secrets for keeping the peace between bluebirds and mockingbirds or robins?



Best Kept Secret - Missouri's First Bluebird Trail



| William L. Groth, Jr.
Supervisor of Education
Museum of Science and Natural History, St. Louis
(Reprinted with permission from *Sialia*, Summer 1979)

Editor's Note:

After learning about a Missouri bluebird trail established in 1938 from Steve Garr's Letter From The President in the Winter issue, I thought it would be really cool to look back on history and include more about the trail in this issue. Thanks to Regina for sending information about it along with noting that its story was published in the Summer, 1979 issue of *Sialia*, the North American Bluebird Society quarterly journal. Originally, I was going to summarize it. But I couldn't have put it better than William Groth Jr., who originally wrote the story. And it is a story worth reviving. With expressed permission from the NABS editor, here is Groth's account of one of Missouri's earliest bluebird trails (perhaps the earliest).

Probably the best kept secret during World War II was the establishment of a National Bluebird Trail. From a modest beginning by a Junior Audubon Club in Cape Girardeau, Missouri in 1938, the Trail grew under the auspices of the Federated Garden Clubs of America to reach coast to coast by 1944. While many details have been lost over the years, some facts can be reported that indicate the scope of the project.

Mrs. Oscar Findley organized the Junior Audubon Club in Cape Girardeau and, under her guidance, the group planned an ambitious project to put up a chain of bluebird houses around Cape on the picturesque Cape Rock Drive. They then banded the bluebirds and kept records of all nesting activities. They wanted to expand the Trail to include all the highways near Cape, but World War II stopped them.

Mrs. Erle R. Jackson, President of the Better Garden Club of Kirkwood, Missouri had visions of extending the Trail throughout Missouri. She secured permission from the Missouri Highway Department to place bluebird houses along the highways. Mr. George E. Moore, state Naturalist and editor of the state Audubon Society bulletin, furnished plans for the houses (designed by Dr. T. E. Musselman of Quincy, Illinois).

In February 1942, Mrs. Jackson suggested the project to the members of her Garden Club, who decided to adopt the Trail as their project. Each member pledged a minimum of two houses for the first Trail, which was to be along U.S. Highway 50 (now Missouri state highway 100).

On March 2, 1942, the first house of the first leg of the Trail leading to Route 50 was put up. Twenty-five bird houses



| Image created in Canva Pro

were put up on that day and the following week the trail was extended to Gray Summit Missouri and through Rockwoods Reservation. Many houses were occupied almost as soon as they were put up.

On March 17, 1942, the Trail was taken over by the State Board of Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri. At least thirteen local clubs were working on the project.

Several Illinois clubs started a Trail from East St. Louis to Springfield, Illinois, which completed the connection between Columbia, Missouri and Springfield, a distance of over 200 miles. On May 6, 1942, the Missouri Bluebird Trail was officially dedicated at Columbia, Missouri. In just these few months, 2,680 houses had been built and placed along Route 50 and an unknown number of miles of side Trails. With the success of the Missouri Trail, visions of extending the Trail coast to coast entered the minds of these dedicated people.

A nationwide call was sent and by the end of 1942, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Iowa, Louisiana and Texas joined Missouri and Illinois. By the end of the year some 4,600 houses were reported up and waiting for tenants. Kansas, Tennessee, Alabama, Colorado, Pennsylvania and Georgia joined in 1943. The

last gaps in the National Bluebird Trail were closed in 1944 when Utah, Nevada, California, Washington, North Dakota, North Carolina and Florida pledged their support. The vision of a coast-to-coast Bluebird Trail had become transformed from a dream to a reality.

On May 9, 1945, the National Bluebird Trail was formally dedicated in Springfield, Missouri. The Federated Garden Clubs were congratulated for their outstanding effort.

By 1946, 6,728 houses had been put up and there were pledges for many more. After this great effort was accomplished, interest began to wane except in local areas. Even conservation departments lost interest. For example, the Field and Forest Wildlife Conservation Club of University City, Missouri High School, put up some 100 houses under the guidance of their sponsor, Mr. Rex Conyers. All houses were placed on the August Busch Wildlife Area operated by the Missouri Department of Conservation.

The houses lasted only a couple of years as all old power and telephone poles were cutdown (houses and all) in order to salvage the copper wire. The wire could have been salvaged just as easily by cutting the poles above the houses.



| Courtesy of Ron Darling

Case Study: 1 Nest, 9 Eggs - Not What You Think

| Katharine Martin (In collaboration with Ron Darling)

If you're a little bit newer to bluebirding and you look at this photo, you might think you're witnessing a miracle, or at least something very out of the ordinary for eastern bluebirds. Knowing that eastern bluebirds typically lay between four to six eggs per clutch, it is quite a surprise if you discover eight, nine, or more eggs in a nest.

For those who have been working with bluebirds for a number of years, however, this picture might immediately suggest something else: egg dumping.

Egg dumping occurs when a female bird lays her eggs in another bird's nest of the same species, leaving that pair to raise all the hatchlings. For bluebirds, this typically happens when a nest site has been lost or when she was simply unable to find a nesting site she liked. In desperation, she leaves her eggs with another mother. This behavior falls under the broader category of brood parasitism, but in the context of egg dumping, it occurs within the same species (*conspecific*).

Longtime Missouri Bluebird Society Member Ron Darling sent this photo in as a What's That submission, and I immediately replied guessing it was a case of egg dumping. **But I was wrong!**

Look closely at the eggs: all nine are white (if you're seeing this in black-and-white, you'll have to use your imagination). White bluebird eggs are a rarer color. And that detail kind of matters.

If this truly were egg dumping, and the host female (the resident of the box) happened to lay white eggs (already uncommon), you'd statistically expect to see at least a few blue eggs mixed in from the dumping female.

So what actually happened? Five eggs were laid and recorded on May 21st, but the egg color wasn't documented in the notes at the time. During a June 13th nest check, the color was finally noted, but by then it was unclear whether these white eggs were newly laid or the same ones from May 21st. Given that uncertainty, the safest choice was to leave them alone.

Then on a July 9th nest check, four more eggs were discovered. And now it was unclear which eggs were old and which were new, so all nine were left in the nest. Ultimately, the eggs were never incubated. Why she didn't incubate remains a mystery. In fact, you are encouraged to write in with speculation and guesses.

The big takeaway Ron mentioned in this unique case study is how important it is to take clear, detailed and accurate notes while monitoring. Don't make any assumptions. Just document, document, document! He added that this is especially important when you aren't able to monitor your boxes as frequently as you would like.

What's That? Answer:
9 White bluebird eggs. Not egg dumping
They are a mix of old and new.

[illegible]

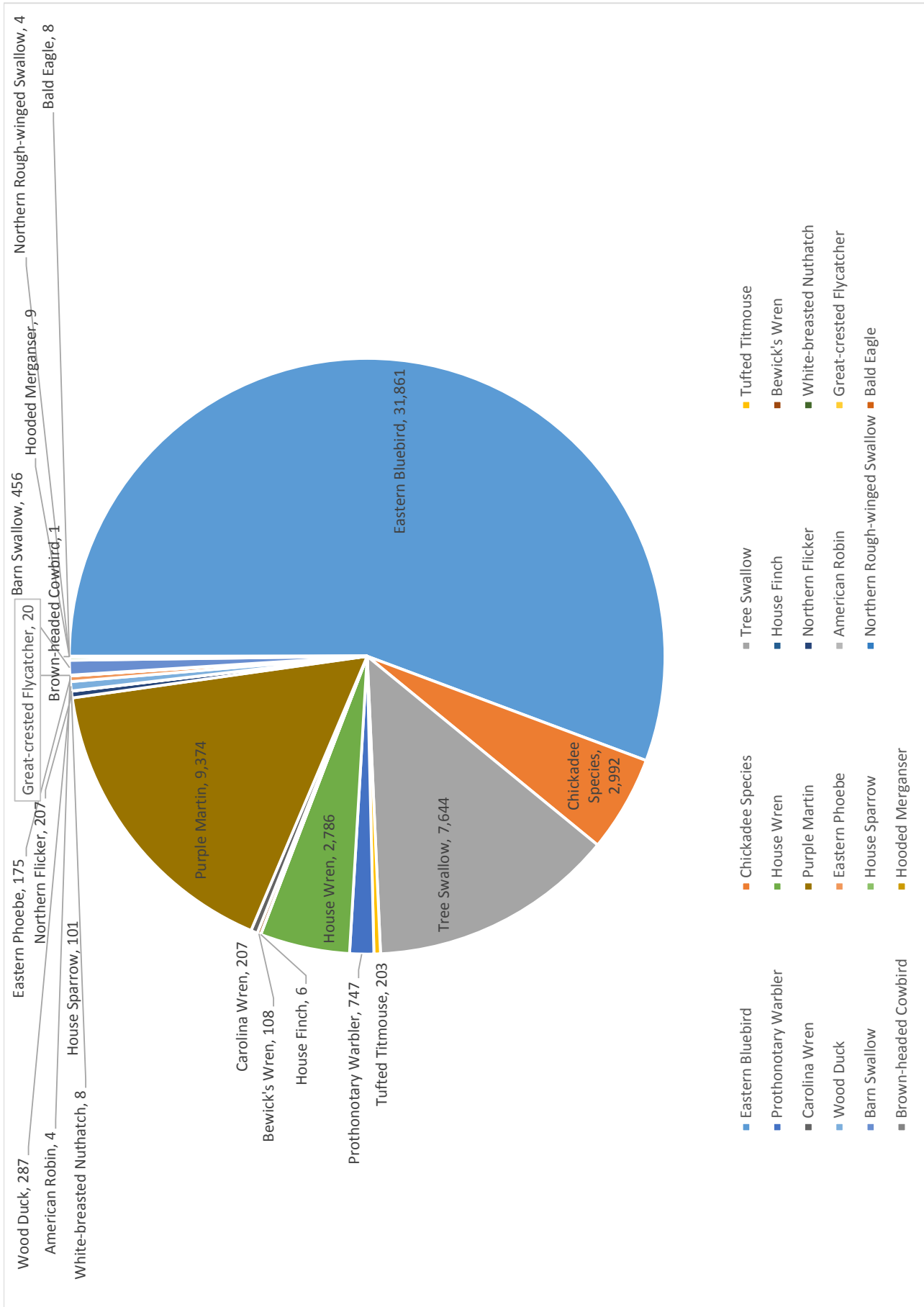
Page | 12

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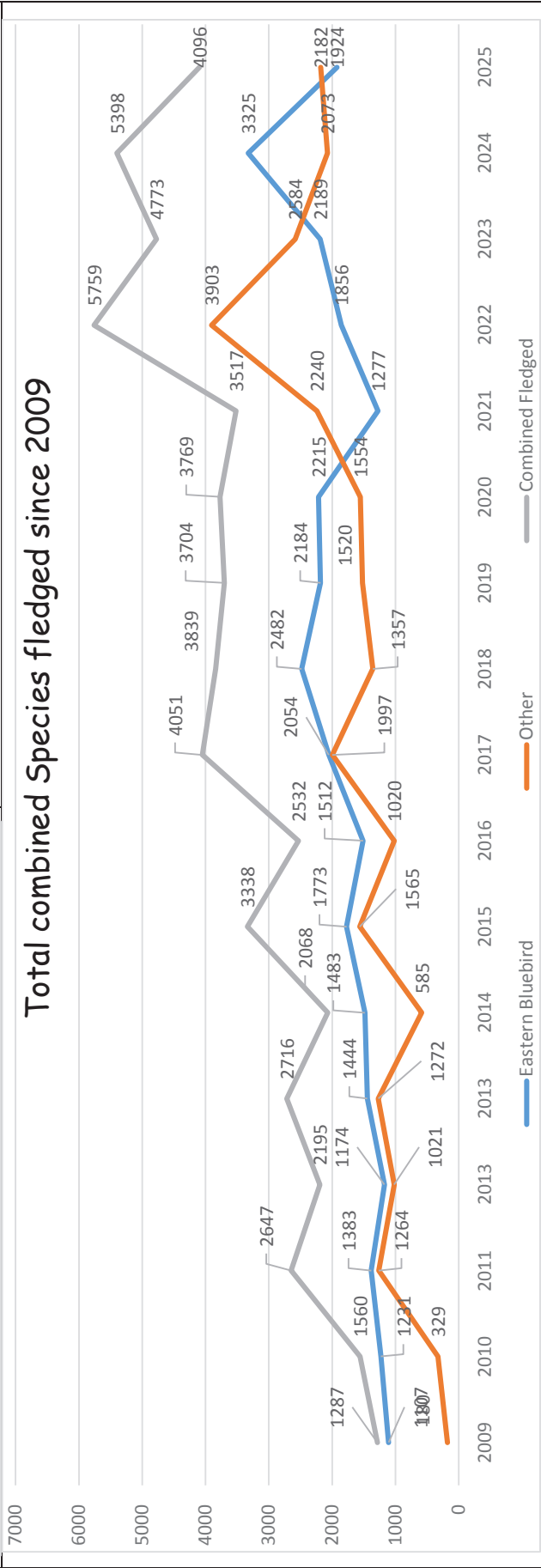
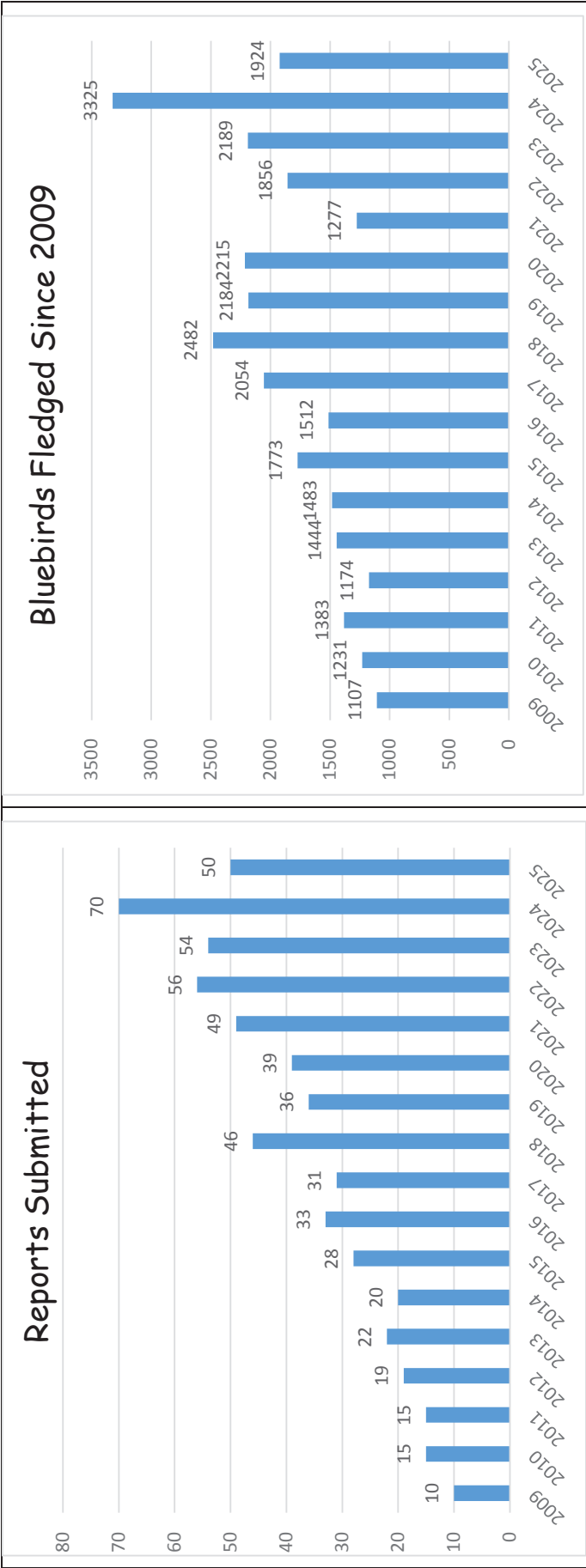
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Page | 13

Missouri Bluebird Society 2025 Nesting Report



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The Fledgling
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The Fledgling | Spring, 2026 Issue



Issue Highlights:

Letter From the President:
20th Anniversary MOBS Conference
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What's That?
Activity With the Kids:
Anyone Can Do Bluebird Outreach
Editor Asks...
Missouri's First Bluebird Trail
Case Study: 1 Nest, 9 Eggs
2025 Nesting Report