

Citizen Resolution # 131223



The Eastern Bluebird and other Grassland Birds are declining at an unprecedented rate in Wisconsin

First identified by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in their journal Science (volume 365, issue 6459) dated September 20, 2019 whereby it was verified that there has been a decline of 2.9 billion birds within North America since 1970. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's publication Living Bird dated Winter 2023 (Volume 42, Issue 1) reports that bird populations are continuing to decline nationwide. Notably, the grassland birds were declining the most by 53% over 50 years.

The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW), established by the Wisconsin Department Natural Resources (WiDNR) in 1986 to reestablish the population of the Eastern Bluebird and other cavity nesting birds (grassland species) in the State that showed significant decline since the mid 1960's. With the field work of hundreds of nesting monitors (Monitors are people who check on nesting boxes every 7-10 days during the nesting season which can last from April into September, but more commonly through July), statewide, BRAW end of season reports show a steady increase of fledged bluebirds to a total of 35,500+ in 2012. Since this time, there has been a significant drop in numbers fledged. The totals in 2022 was 13,683 fledged, almost a third less.

Causation has been documented to be attributed loss of habitat, environmental degradation including the use of pesticides and climate change. The latter can not be practically addressed at this time, but the others can.

Though this significant decline can be attributed to more than one issues, most can be resolved with a concentrated effort across the state with an emphasis on education. Using the resources of the WiDNR publications and statewide network, posters at libraries, participation of the appropriate departments within our state university sites, seminars through 4-H and the Farm services, a continued effort to alert people of these issue (avoiding just a one shot deal) may impact and help slow or correct the avian decline in our state, especially grassland birds.

Do you support the WCC working with the DNR using their resources and working with BRAW to expand nesting box monitors and to help educate farmers about the impact of pesticides on grassland bird populations?

Additional Information provided by author:

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