

Friends of the Bluebirds (FOTB) Fall Meeting

October 19, 2025

Riverbank Discovery Centre, Brandon Manitoba

The fall meeting of the Friends of the Bluebirds was held at the Riverbank Discovery Centre in Brandon on Sunday, October 19, 2025. Thirty-two members and four guests in attendance.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair, Phil Weiss, called meeting to order at 1:35 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: To approve the fall agenda as presented.

Moved by Herb Goulden/Seconded by George Michniewicz.....Carried.

3. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the April 13, 2025, FOTB meeting and the Executive Committee June 30, 2025, electronic motion be approved as circulated

Moved by Dan Chranowski/Seconded by Barry Danard.....Carried.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Phil Weiss called upon members to provide reports:

50th Anniversary Information – George Michniewicz

- George provided a report. See Page 3.

Membership – Carole Sangster

- There are 140 members (8 new members for 2024) and 90 lines.

Line Management – Dan Chranowski/Bruno Bruederlin

- Dan announced that Bruno Bruederlin is no longer working with Line Management but will continue with his bluebird lines.
- Friends of the Bluebirds thanks Bruno for all his work and support over the years with the Line Management project.
- Dan encouraged members to stay connected and communicate where lines are with Dan and C. Sangster as we work to monitor all the lines.
- Reports from members in attendance included mice in nests, flying squirrels and chipmunks.

GPS Project/Nature Manitoba 2025 Proposal: Phil Weiss

- Nature Manitoba Year One report on Page 4.
- We have entered year two of the GPS project and have received our second instalment of \$5,000.00.
- The project is for three years.
- The plan is to GPS all the FOTB lines out on the Manitoba landscape,
- We are close to being done.
- Manitoba Habitat Conservancy is providing technical support in the mapping of the GPS. The map will be on our website and will provide a more detailed current data base of the bluebird lines.
- Members doing the GPS work include Herb Goulden, Dan Chranowski, Bruno Bruederlin, Ian Milliken, and Phil Weiss.

Financial Report: Wendy Bulloch

- The October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025, Financial Report was provided – the balance at the beginning of the year was \$4,528.89 with revenue of \$7,370.50 and expenses of \$6,774.16 (this included the 50th Anniversary celebrations) ending with a balance on September 30, 2025, of \$5,125.23.

Data/Web Management – Linda Pearn

- Linda could not make the meeting – P. Weiss reported on her behalf. The current hosting plan of the website was moved to a Bluehost Level 1 plan for three years.
- Linda had expressed that she wanted to not be involved in managing the web site and the website needed upgrading.
- Assiniboine College has been engaged to work on the website.

MOTION: To accept all reports as presented.

Moved by Ian Milliken/Seconded by Ken Barclay..... Carried

5. NEW BUSINESS:

- Assiniboine College (AC) no longer ACC - has a course titled Capstone. Capstone as part of the work partners with local business and non-profit organizations to help them with web development.
- FOTB applied in the spring for this project and the project was approved.
- Drew Miles provided further information – two students are currently working on this project – Holly Staples and Adriana Martinez
- They will help with website assistance, newsletter, ad campaign.
- Capstone Project is a cooperative program that provides direct, industry-focused projects that allow but often involve collaboration with external partners to solve practical problems, such as environmental cleanup, financial planning, and/or community initiatives.
- Our FOTB partnership with the Capstone Project goes until April 2026 with the possibility of extension.
- Angie from the Shilo Base wants to contribute and Carla Chamberlain has experience in sales and media.

FINAL CALL for Chair Nominations – Phil Weiss

- Current Chair Phil Weiss asked for a call for nominations from the floor for the position of FOTB Chair.
- Phil has been the chair for five years.
- No nominations were forthcoming.
- The organization will need to decide how to proceed without a chair.

6. 2025 NESTING SEASON UPDATE:

- Eight bluebird eggs in one nest,
- Twenty-eight boxes and the first line check all boxes were tree swallows, have not had that in the seven years I have looked after the line.
- Silver haired bat in one box in late September – gone the next day.
- Noted that bluebirds and tree swallows are now arriving at same time. So are they fighting for the nest and if so – tree swallows may win out.
- The 2020-2021 snowstorm in Texas contributed a huge loss to bluebird population,

- Many reported having increased numbers of bluebirds nesting,
- Others reported a second nest – which was bluebird on top of tree swallow nest.
- Reports of mice in nest in late September.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

- Meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.
- Moved by Barry Danard and Seconded by Kathy Peters..... Carried

Friends of the Bluebirds – 50th Anniversary Reflection

Fall Meeting October 19, 2025

How should we celebrate our 50th Friends of the Bluebirds Anniversary? Where should it be and What should it look like were questions being asked at last year’s fall meeting.

And now it is behind us – and we can say with pride it turned out beautifully.

We had more than fifty members and guests come together from across southwestern Manitoba. Among them were our guest speaker Barb Andrew, great-niece of our founder John Lane. Barb took us on a wonderful journey through time – far beyond those fifty years.

Indigenous Leaders from Treaties 2 and 4, local farmers, and families from the Military Family Services Centre at CFB Shilo, attended our event.

We owe a huge thank you to Carla Chamberlain, who hosted and sponsored the event at her beautiful Boot Hill Weddings and Events venue. There are a number of other sponsors and donors who made this event possible – we are so grateful for each of them.

Even though the morning weather was not perfect, Friends of the Bluebirds came from every direction. Inside, surrounded by beautiful photographs and great company, we shared a homemade lunch prepared by Carla and her team and enjoyed the 50th Anniversary Slab Cake over the coffee. It was warm, personal, and full of great conversations. The day reminded us of something important: our work matters and it must continue.

For fifty years, Friends of the Bluebirds has cared for cavity-nesting birds and protected their homes. Now it is our turn to carry that mission forward – the next fifty years and beyond.

The secret to keeping this going is simple, welcome new members, invite new ideas and encourage young birders to join us. Every new person brings new energy – and every young birder ensures that the bluebirds song continues to fill Manitoba’s skies.

And just like the bluebirds, who spread their wings across the land, we too must spread the word about who we are and what we do – so that more people can discover our club, join us and help keep this energy alive.

A big thank you to Kathy, Dan, Phil and Linda for your time, your dedication, and your friendship.

Respectfully submitted
George Michniewicz

Friends of the Bluebirds GPS Project Year One Report

Friends of the Bluebirds in southwestern Manitoba have been operating since 1975. A group of 115 volunteers, of which 85 active volunteers check nest box lines. On these lines are approximately 2500 boxes that are visited each year to determine the cavity nester count. Boxes may have bluebirds – Mountain and/or Eastern or Tree Swallows, Wrens and/or other cavity nesters. Volunteers look to have either Mountain Bluebirds or Eastern Bluebirds as occupants. The Texas/Oklahoma snowstorm in 2022 saw a dramatic decrease in the Bluebird population across Canada.

At the 2023 fall meeting Friends of the Bluebirds, there was identified a need to georeference these 85 lines to 1) facilitate the succession of line monitors as volunteers retire, 2) identify areas that are under-served with nest boxes, 3) determine local population fluctuations and to 4) expedite grassland bird research.

In the winter of 2024, the group applied for a three-year grant with Nature Manitoba to begin georeferencing these lines. This grant is made possible by Guent and Elva Salzmänn for their desire to leave a legacy for wildlife conservation with the creation of The Manitoba Bluebird Fund and to Nature Manitoba for stepping up as a deserving lead partner with the Winnipeg Foundation.

During the summer and fall of 2024, five Friends of the Bluebird volunteers had an excellent field season, traveling over 15,000 kilometers georeferencing 42 of 85 nest box lines. Fifteen of the 42 completed lines were done at no cost to the project; these were lines georeferenced by the project team in the course of their monitoring. Seventy-five nesting boxes were built to replace aging out and decaying boxes. Manitoba Habitat Conservancy (MHC) provided geo technology information and data base support. MHC and Nature Manitoba are invaluable partners to the project.

The project is moving forward to complete year two in the 2025 field season. The organization will be celebrating 50 years in June of ongoing documentation of the bluebird count. The first Bluebird lines were started by John Lane.