

The Florida Bluebird



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FBS Has Opportunity to Discuss Nest Boxes and Predator Guards At Lake County Birding Festival

Two representatives of the Florida Bluebird Society had the opportunity to explain key features of good bluebird nestboxes and predator guards during the Inaugural Wings and Wildflowers Festival in Hickory Point Park in Lake County September 28-30. Faith Jones, FBS Treasurer, and Jane Miller staffed the FBS exhibit and shared the FBS's dedication to the conservation and protection of Bluebird in the Sunshine State. The FBS display was one of more than 60 at the festival, which was well attended. (See Page 4 for pic of FBS exhibit)

Louis Nipper – A Passion For Giving Bluebirds Nest Boxes to Call Home



Louis Nipper, of Hernando, shows Faith Jones, Florida Bluebird Society Treasurer, one of the many Peterson-type bluebird nest boxes he has made. Nipper is donating nest boxes to the FBS for educational and outreach displays.

See story on Page 2



FBS Membership News

New Special Members

(All Special Members Are Listed
On the FBS Web Site)

Life Member

Madison (Bub) Alderson – Williston

Patron

Sandy Reed – Valrico

Membership Milestone; First FBS Life Member

The Florida Bluebird Society reached a milestone this past month when Madison “Bub” Alderson of Williston became the first Life Member.

Alderson became a life member after an exchange of emails concerning the care of bluebirds. Asked why he decided to become a life member, Alderson wrote: “I figured that opting for a Life Membership in the Florida Bluebird Society would be a donation to that beautiful bird still in need of cavity-nesting, while also being a donation toward ‘live artwork’ for those folks coming along in the future.”

In writing a short synopsis of his attachment to bluebirds, Alderson wrote: Living in south Florida – Coral Gables – since 1935, I had never seen bluebirds. A friend and well-known birder in the Tropical Audubon Society, Mort Cooper., showed me bluebirds near Tamiami Trail at 40 mile bend.

Louis Nipper – Dedicated To Giving Bluebirds A Nest Box to Call Home

Louis Nipper, one of the Florida Bluebird Society’s newest members, is a person with a passion for helping promote the conservation and protection of bluebirds in the Sunshine State.

The calendar says Nipper, of Hernando, is 86 years old, but his monitoring of nest boxes along the 46-mile bluebird trail in Withlacoochee State Trail that stretches through Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties belie the enthusiasm he has for bluebirds.

Nipper also has donated nest boxes for a new trail which is to be a joint project with the Seminole Audubon Society and Seminole State Forest. He also has donated nest boxes to be used by the Florida Bluebird Society as part of its educational and outreach displays.

Many of the nest boxes along the Withlacoochee State Trail are those that Nipper built. He began building bluebird nest boxes in 2000 to place around Citrus Hill in Citrus County. Then about five years ago he responded to a notice for volunteers to help provide bluebird nest boxes on the Withlacoochee State Trail.

Some 266 bluebird nest boxes later, Nipper still is busy helping to monitor the trail two mornings a week. Assisting him are Roger Williams and Barney Barnhill. Nipper estimates that during the past two years some 2,500 nestlings have fledged from boxes along the trail. As part of the monitoring process, Nipper keeps records of the numbered boxes.

Nipper’s nest boxes are modeled after the Peterson nest box. However, instead of using the usual pine or cedar, Nipper’s nest boxes are made of ply board and covered with aluminum. It takes about 10 hours for Nipper to construct each individual

Membership Milestone (Cont)

Love at first sight!

“After 33 years teaching in the Dade County school system, I moved to Old Homosassa, built bluebird houses....and success.

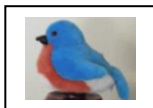
“My wife, Patty, and I maintained two successful bluebird houses. Patty became worried about hurricanes so we built a log cabin south of Williston and exulted in many more bluebirds and more fledging success.

“I now have a large woodshop and enjoy providing houses for bluebirds, chickadees, titmice, kestrels and martins.”

However, Alderson omitted some relevant data. In a previous email he wrote, in part, “Six months ago my wife and I had a log home build on 20 acres south of Williston. My wife passed away one month ago, so now it’s just my cat and I and birds...

“There are many bluebirds in this area and many other species. I’m proud to say that I am the surrogate father to several fledges. I build bluebird houses to give to friends and neighbors and intend to put up more of them on my acreage.

“At 78 I probably should be considering your retirement area and will go to your website for information.”



QUESTIONS?

How many nest boxes did you monitor this season?

How many birds fledged?

What is the most unusual event that took place on your bluebird trail this season?

Let us hear from you!!!

(floridabluebirdsociety@yahoo.com)

Your Help is Needed; FBS Fall Bluebird Blitz To be Held Nov. 16-17

Bluebird lovers throughout the state are invited to participate in the Florida Bluebird Society’s fifth statewide Bluebird Blitz on Friday and Saturday, November 16-17.

Participants can download reporting forms and information on the Blitz from the Florida Bluebird Society’s home page (floridabluebirdsociety.com).

The FBS has sponsored the statewide bluebird blitzes each Spring and Fall since November 2010 in an effort to help learn the status of the Eastern Bluebird in Florida. When the FBS was created in 2009 there was little information available to help determine if the Eastern Bluebird population in Florida was increasing or decreasing.

The Blitz is a concentrated effort on specific dates to locate as many Eastern Bluebirds as possible in a specific location. By gathering information throughout the state over a span of many years the FBS hopes to answer the question about the status of the Eastern Bluebird population in Florida.

The Spring Blitz is held to learn where bluebirds are nesting. The Fall Blitz is held to provide information on the habitat and feeding habits of bluebirds during the non-breeding season. Florida bluebird sightings submitted to ebird during the Blitz dates also are integrated into participants’ reports in an effort to gather information from all possible sources and expand the knowledge base.

Bluebirds have been reported in 47 of Florida’s 67 counties since the Blitz was initiated in 2010. This past April reports were received from 33 counties, with 496 bluebirds sighted. That is the smallest number reported since the Blitz was initiated. Pasco County reported 102 sightings this past April, the most for one county since the FBS began sponsoring the Blitz. Reports of past Blitz results by county are available on the Florida Bluebird Society’s home page.



Jane Miller, top pic, staffs Florida Bluebird Society's display at Inaugural Wings and Wildflower Birding Festival sponsored by Lake County in Hickory Point Park. Display promotes FBS activities in left photo.



Deadly Encounter; Bird Is Caught By Snake in Tree

by Glenda Simmons

A few weeks ago, I was horrified to watch a huge snake, at the back of my property, about 40 ft up an old, mostly dead tree, eating some of the birds from my yard. I never saw it go to the ground, and believe it was staying inside the tree. It would be positioned to strike every morning, at day break, and I was greeted by this sight, as I opened my kitchen blinds. It was there, every day, for over a week, usually just in the mornings, but later until dark. I have video clips of it on my web page, and one of the clips, shows three of my bluebirds harassing the snake. One bluebird narrowly missed its death from the snake, and all I could do was watch, and yell at the bluebirds. I was able to extract a still image from this video clip. One bird (a



In top photo taken from video clip, bluebirds harass snake in tree. In bottom photo, snake has bird, believed to be a grackle. Photos by Glenda Simmons

grackle?) was not lucky. I have not seen the snake now in three weeks, and am, so hoping, that I will not. But I don't understand why it would move on, when it obviously had found a steady food source. It really has me concerned about next season, as a snake this size could probably get past my predator guards. If you want to see the video clips, they are in the video section of my web page (glendasimmonsphotography.com), and if you have any new ideas for snake proofing, I will be all ears.

Another Bluebird Trail Is Hatched

Amelia Island Residents Invite Bluebirds into Their neighborhood

By Candace Bridgewater

Last winter at Omni Amelia Island Plantation near Fernandina Beach a small group met to discuss developing a bluebird trail. The concept of properly erected nest boxes throughout our neighborhoods to encourage nesting and production of this lovely native bird was greeted with enthusiasm, including assistance from Omni, funding from the board, and the generosity of residents and friends.

We now have four bluebird nest boxes in place – one outside the resident's club, one in a park and two on the golf courses.

Bluebirds are a bit like baseball teams, "Build it and they will come," but it does seem to take some time for these small birds to settle in. The pioneer nesters at two boxes were Carolina chickadees. Both nests fledged successfully, then the nest remains were removed, and the box readied for its next occupants.

On July 21 a nest box monitor discovered four small, pale blue, un-speckled eggs. Unsure of their identification we just waited and observed from the porch. There were happy smiles all around when adult male and female Eastern Bluebirds were seen actively feeding their chicks. Success!

A bluebird built a nest and laid one pale blue egg in the park box, but the box was abandoned. Perhaps it was a young bird with little experience. We'll welcome it back next spring!

A nest was built at the golf course site and clearly held young birds that have fledged. All signs ('bluebirdish' nest material and splashes on the walls) point to a bluebird nest, so we're hopeful.

We cautioned that only nest box monitors should open a box. Not knowing if there are lively chicks inside, an interested person might flush birds too young to survive outside and lead to their deaths.

All in all it has been a very successful year for the bluebird project. We have several residents who have asked for boxes of their own which we'll help site. Our talented neighbor Michael Cipriano will make and install the nest boxes.

We're hoping that many sociable bluebirds will soon populate our neighborhoods. The following websites will answer most bluebird questions, and you'll be able to share information about the bluebird trail with children and grandchildren.

Information on establishing a bluebird trail and plans for nest boxes is available from the Florida Bluebird Society, (floridabluebirdsociety.com) and the North American Bluebird Society (nabluebirdsociety.org).

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