



## Publication

### **Dedicated to Bluebird Enthusiasts**

The Florida Bluebird Society's mission is the conservation and protection of bluebirds and other federally protected cavity nesting bird species in North America. The FBS encourages a collaborative effort from its members and readers to provide information, ideas and articles to help collect and disseminate pertinent and relevant information pertaining to bluebirds in Florida.

The FBS is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society.

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## Tales From the Trails



**We would love to fly into your backyard and see pictures of your bluebirds or nesting cavity birds with informative and interesting stories you may have about them. Please keep pictures to a maximum of 5 for each submission and a short story if you have one. We may have to edit your submission to accommodate space or to complement other newsletter content for that issue.**

**We can use several submissions per monthly issue so we will save multiples received for future issues.**

**Please email your nature pictures and stories to Barbie Arms, FBS Corresponding Secretary at [Floridabluebirds@aol.com](mailto:Floridabluebirds@aol.com)**

The craziest thing happened yesterday as I watched for a very long time.

I have a Bluebird box by the driveway and they always nest there. Tonight we listened and heard what we thought were chick noises in the box. Yet shortly thereafter, we saw a group of Eastern Bluebirds chasing each other all over the pasture, never stopping, moving very very fast. We opened the box and there were no birds in there, but without a doubt, they had been in there.

Then the group of birds, a dozen at least, continued to chase, then they would fly up and down facing each other and flying in little circles. This went on for quite a while. Finally they slowed down enough for me to see what each bird looked like. What I thought might be fledged birds actually seemed to be adult Bluebirds in some odd mating behavior. There were males that fought with each other on the ground so aggressively I thought they would kill each other. This went on all over. Then a male or two would sit next to a female and wave a wing, and the female would wave a wing back, then they would fly again in large groups together. I watched one pair, finally down to one male and one female, next to each other on the fence. The male would flap a wing, then the female would flap while facing each other. One bird would turn and the other would hop to it, then they would change direction. This went on forever. Then the male flew off and the female became the aggressor, chasing the male who seemed totally uninterested. She would flap her wing at him he would ignore it and fly away. She would follow, flap her wing, he would watch then leave. This went on until they flew away where I could not see them any longer.

**Patti  
Ocala, FL.**

Deadline for submissions for the August issue is August 12, 2012



Photo courtesy of Jacquie Ott in Lutz, FL.

FLORIDA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT  
EASTERN BLUEBIRDS THROUGHOUT FLORIDA  
Florida Bluebird Society Partners with the USA National Phenology Network



The Florida Bluebird Society (FBS) and the USA National Phenology Network (NPN) have begun working together in an effort to learn more about the status of the Eastern Bluebird in the Sunshine State.

Through the efforts of Barbie Arms, representing the Florida Bluebird Society, and Theresa M. Crimmins, Partnerships & Outreach Coordinator of the USA-NPN, the two organizations have formed a partnership to post Eastern Bluebird nest box information on the USA-NPN web site.

Posting the nest box information on the USA-NPN web site will show the distribution and status of the Eastern Bluebird population in Florida.

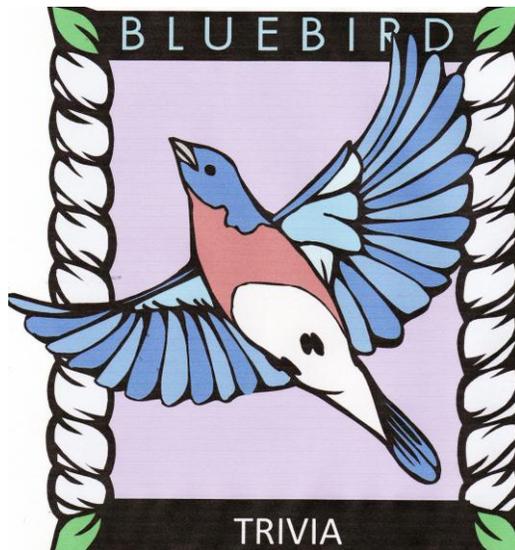
Posting data about the Eastern Bluebird on the USA-NPN is not limited to members of the Florida Bluebird Society. In an effort to gather data about the Eastern Bluebird in Florida, any individual who monitors Eastern Bluebird nest boxes – whether one or 100 – in the Sunshine State is eligible to post information on the USA-NPN web site.

FBS encourages bluebird enthusiasts throughout Florida to share their bluebird observations. Instructions are available to sign up with USA-NPN and enter observations or retrieve data by visiting the FBS website <http://www.floridabluebirdsociety.com>

The Florida Bluebird Society was organized in August 2009 to help foster the conservation and protection of Bluebirds and other federally protected cavity nesting bird species in North America through educational programs and the collection and dissemination of pertinent and relevant information. Working with the NPN is another step in the FBS' efforts to collect more information about the Eastern Bluebird in Florida.

Phenology refers to recurring plant and animal life cycle stages, or phenophases. The USA National Phenology Network utilizes citizen scientists, government agencies, non-profit groups, educators and students to monitor the impacts of climate change on plants and animals in the United States. The network harnesses the power of people and the Internet to collect and share information, providing researchers with far more data than they could collect alone.

Additional information about becoming involved in this project is available from our website or from the USA National Phenology Website <http://www.usanpn.org>



### **Blue Redbreasts**

The eastern bluebird with its rusty breast, reminded early British settlers of the robin redbreast back home, and was sometimes called the “blue redbreast”. Both species are in the thrush, or *Turdidae* family and similar in size and shape. These early settlers found other similarities between eastern bluebirds and their English robins ( *Erithacus rubecula*). Like English robins, eastern bluebirds often live near houses. When there is a shortage of natural nesting sites in hollow trees, both species will use nest boxes.

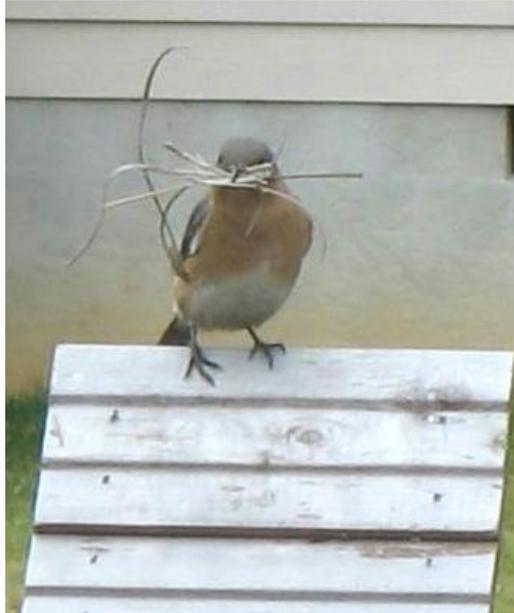
## **Welcome New Members**



<b>Sandy &amp; Ray DiTirro</b>	<b>Niceville, FL.</b>
<b>Margaret England</b>	<b>LaBelle, FL.</b>
<b>John &amp; Diane Fye</b>	<b>Valirico, FL.</b>
<b>Julie Johnson</b>	<b>Ocala, FL.</b>
<b>Joy Rumans</b>	<b>Ocala, FL.</b>

**We are glad you joined our nest!**

## HELP WANTED



The Florida Bluebird Society is looking for a few good people to help expand its efforts to conserve and protect bluebirds and other federally protected cavity nesting bird species in the Sunshine State.

Specifically, the Florida Bluebird Society is looking for a volunteer who has experience publishing a monthly newsletter. Barbie Arms, the current editor, is doing an outstanding job, but would appreciate a volunteer who would help share the monthly opportunity to publicize the activities of the Florida Bluebird Society. This would include assisting in the writing, editing and layout. Specific responsibilities would be worked out between Barbie and the individual volunteering to serve as co-editor.

The Florida Bluebird Society also is looking for avid and knowledgeable bluebird enthusiasts who would be willing to share their experiences and expertise with other interested individuals. These volunteers would have the opportunity to help provide the best available information on creating and maintaining bluebird nest boxes in Florida. Individuals serving as a regional county coordinator also would have the added opportunity of meeting other people from their area who share their interest in bluebirds.

Of course, all volunteers would be expected to comply fully with the mission and policy guidelines of the Florida Bluebird Society.

Contact Barbie at email [floridabluebirds@aol.com](mailto:floridabluebirds@aol.com)



### ***It's time to Renew your Membership in the Florida Bluebird Society***

As a member of the Florida Bluebird Society (FBS), you join with other individuals across Florida who share your enthusiasm and commitment to bluebirds in Florida. Organized in 2009, the FBS is dedicated to conservation and protection of bluebirds and other federally-protected cavity nesting birds in Florida.

During the past year, your membership and participation has helped FBS:

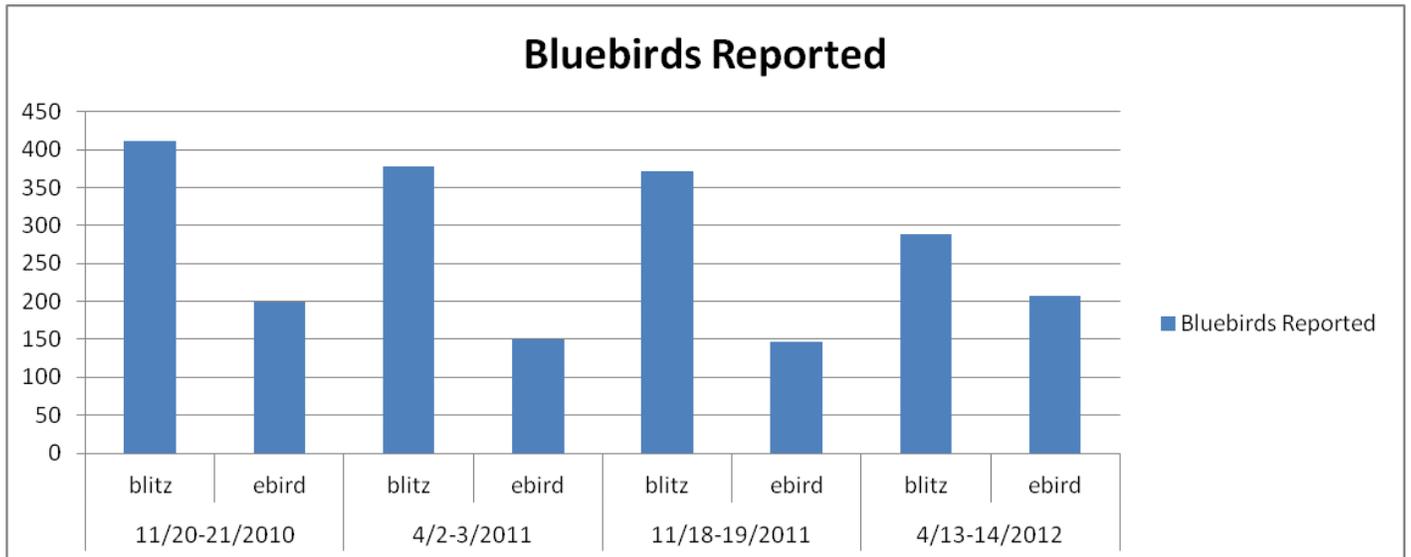
- Produce a monthly e-newsletter. Our newsletter is distributed via e-mail and includes articles regarding bluebirds. It is also used to keep you informed of our activities.
- Conduct Fall and Spring Statewide Bluebird Blitzes. The information we gather from each Blitz is helping to achieve one of our initial goals, to determine the location of bluebirds in Florida during nesting and non-nesting season.
- Form a partnership with the U.S. National Phenology Network (NPN) for the collection and analysis of bluebird nesting data.
- Comply with State and Federal regulations regarding nest monitoring. We have also drafted a Code of Ethics for the FBS.
- Expand our research on nest box temperatures, and start a project to determine the importance of cleaning nest boxes between nestings.
- Maintain our web site, [floridabluebirdsociety.com](http://floridabluebirdsociety.com), as a resource for our members and other individuals interested in bluebirds.

Your membership is vital for the continuation of the work we have started and to meet the goals for next season that will be finalized at our meeting on Saturday August 18, 2012 in Gainesville. Meeting details are in our Calendar of events and we hope you will be able to attend.

If you have questions regarding your membership please contact Faith at 407-330-4855, or via e-mail at [floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com).

Faith Jones, Membership Chair

## Statewide Bluebird Blitz in April 2012



11/20-21/2010		4/2-3/2011		11/18-19/2011		4/13-14/2012	
blitz	ebird	blitz	ebird	blitz	ebird	blitz	ebird
411	200	377	150	371	147	288	208

Participants in the Florida Bluebird Society's two-day statewide Bluebird Blitz in April reported seeing 288 bluebirds in 47 of the state's 67 counties. An additional 208 bluebird sightings were reported on ebird during the Bluebird Blitz held April 13-14, 2012, raising the combine total to 496 sightings.

The 37 participants reported seeing bluebirds in many of Florida's northern tier states from Escambia to Nassau counties and as far south as Collier County. The largest number of bluebirds was reported seen in the central block of counties. Pasco County's combined total of 102 bluebird reports topped all other counties. Pinellas County, with 55 reported sightings, was second highest.

The statewide Spring Bluebird Blitz is held to help determine where bluebirds are found in Florida during the nesting season. The Fall Bluebird Blitz is held in an effort to learn what habitat bluebirds use and what they eat during the non-breeding season.

The Blitzes are part of the Florida Bluebird Society's two-pronged efforts to determine the status of the Eastern Bluebird population in the state. The Blitzes focus on reports of visual sightings of bluebirds. The second program conducted in partnership with the National Phenology Network focuses on a brief seasonal summary of bluebird nesting results.

While the focus of the two programs differs, the FBS believes that increasing reports from bluebird enthusiasts over a span of years will help reveal if the state's bluebird population is increasing or decreasing, where bluebirds are being seen, and where they are nesting. Success of the programs hinges on the continuing reports of sufficient volunteers throughout the state. The FBS has been charting results of the Bluebirds Blitz and ebird reports since November 2010. With only two years of Bluebird Blitz and ebird reports charted, and with the

variation in the number of reports received, the FBS believes it is still too soon to draw any conclusions concerning the status of the Eastern Bluebird population in Florida.

The accompanying chart compares the number of Blitz and ebird reports since November 2010.

A chart displaying the complete report by counties since November 2010 and for information on participating in the NPN nestbox summary program is available on the FBS website ([floridabluebirdsociety.com](http://floridabluebirdsociety.com)).



## 2012 Calendar of Events

FBS Pizza Party and Annual Meeting  
Saturday August 18th at 11:00 A.M.

Location is at Leonardo's Pizza at Millhopper  
4131 N.W. 16<sup>th</sup> Blvd.  
Gainesville, FL. 32605

RSVP Elena at email [elena.sachs@myfwc.com](mailto:elena.sachs@myfwc.com) or phone 352 732-1225  
Visit the website and see their menu at <http://www.leonardosmillhopper.com/menu.html>  
Here is the link to their location through mapquest  
<http://www.leonardosmillhopper.com/location.html>

We hope to see you there!



Here is a **new** Q and A section to help get your questions answered. Let us connect as members and help each other with our bluebirds!

Send your question so we can get the answer. Please let us know about any experiences you have regarding our questions. We will post your answers in the next newsletter.



**Question** from Bill Pennewill Do the same pair of bluebirds renest in the same nest box?

This is a question that I have asked myself numerous times when checking the nest boxes in the trail that I monitor at the Penney Retirement Community (PRC) in Penney Farms, in Clay County, just outside Jacksonville.

By the end of this season I hope to have the answer to at least one of the nest boxes through the efforts of Meret Wilson, bird bandler at Tomoka State Park. Meret spoke at a meeting of the Penney Birders at PRC in March.

As part of her presentation, Meret put up some nets on the PRC to demonstrate bird banding. Meret was able to band both the male and female bluebirds nesting in one of the nest boxes. Since then both of the banded birds have been seen in the vicinity of the nest box.

At the time Meret banded both birds there was a completed nest in the box. By the end of April three eggs had hatched and the nestlings had successfully fledged.

The Scientific Collecting Permit issued by the Florida Wildlife Commission to the Florida Bluebird Society prohibits removing empty bluebird nests from a box until after the end

of the season. The nest box will be monitored throughout the season to (1) see if the bluebirds will build a new nest on top of the first nest and (2) if a new nest is build, will be it be the same banded bluebirds which built the first nest?

Only time will give us answer to these two questions.

**Question** From Faith Jones

Have you ever heard of a successful nest box on the side of a house? Linda Neale sent in this picture.



**Question** From Jim Anderson

We live in a golfing community and have 20 bluebird houses scattered throughout the course. Many of the houses that we checked yesterday are empty, but there seems to be a family of small frogs taking up residency in some of them and removing them does not seem to help they tend to return. Can you tell me if frogs in the bluebird house will dissuade the birds from using that house? We do have one house that has 4 eggs but also had 5 small frogs (tree frogs?) in it. Will the birds continue with their activities or is there a way to keep the frogs out. Thanks in advance for your help. We are proud bluebird watchers.

**Answer** From David Kirk Naples, Fl.

A solution to Jim Anderson's question would be to spread graphite grease on the poles holding the boxes, provided the poles are made of metal. This will keep out frogs as well as lizards, snakes, raccoons and other unwanted visitors.

### **Question From FBS**

Has anyone else tried using graphite grease on their poles? If so, let us know how this works out. We're always interested in learning new ways to deter "critters" from getting into a nest box.

**Question** From Deb Kuhnly in Ormond Beach, FL.

Where should the pole guard actually be placed on the pole, is this too high or just right?



### **Question From FBS**

Does anyone have any comments if this works?

This is a new twist to killing fire ant colonies. For those not familiar with Walter Reeves, he is from the University of Georgia Agriculture Department, specializing in home gardening. His television show, 'Gardening in Georgia', is on every Saturday. I know fire ants are picky eaters and any type of poison that is effective takes seven feeding steps before the queen receives it. Plus, if the bait is stored in close proximity to any petroleum or fertilizer products they won't touch it. Contact poisons that are on the market just cause the colony to move away. A developed colony can be as deep as 30 feet and spread out some 20 to 50 feet from the mound center... This was documented by studies done in the early 60's when they were first sited in South Alabama. An environmentally friendly cure for fire ants has been announced by Walter Reeves on his Georgia Gardener radio program. Testimonials that it REALLY WORKS are coming in. Simply pour two cups of CLUB SODA (carbonated water) directly in the center of a fire ant mound. The carbon dioxide in the water is heavier than air and displaces the oxygen which suffocates the queen and the other ants. The whole colony will be dead within about two days. Besides eliminating the ants, club soda leaves no poisonous residue, does not contaminate the

ground water, and does not indiscriminately kill other insects and It is not harmful to your pets. Each mound must be treated individually and a one liter bottle of club soda will kill 2 to 3 mounds. Spread the word.

**Question** from FBS

Is it possible for bluebirds to have 4 broods in a year? This is the latest I have had seen them start a fourth nest. I usually get 3 a year and this will bring them into August. Have you heard of reports of this happening elsewhere in Florida? Must be a good year for them.

**Answer**

Very unusual -- but not impossible -- for four nestings. Don't remember ever having one during years monitoring nest boxes at the Penney Retirement Community. Have a lot of three nestings.

FBS would appreciate hearing from others about their experiences with four nestings in a season -- when first nesting started and birds fledged from fourth nesting.

And don't forget to go to the FBS web page for data on entering your information on the National Phenology Network (NPN) so the FBS will begin to have data on the status of bluebirds in Florida.

Please send your Questions and Answers to Barbie at [Floridabluebirds@aol.com](mailto:Floridabluebirds@aol.com)



## Thank You

In 2011, the Florida Bluebird Society was fortunate to have Organizational Members, Sponsors, and a few generous contributors that we would like recognize. We acknowledge and thank the following special members for their support:

BASCA, Inc., Orange Park FL ([bascainc.org](http://bascainc.org))  
Jeff & Marj Bryant  
Bruce Darnell  
David Foster (in honor of)  
Fred Vroom  
Gainesville Garden Club

Col. Burton Walrath  
Wild Birds Unlimited, St. Johns (jacksonville.wbu.com)  
Wild Birds Unlimited, Tallahassee ([wbutallahassee@centurylink.net](mailto:wbutallahassee@centurylink.net))



**\*\*Reminder\*\***

If **you** are planning to change **your** email address please inform us and send updates to Barbie. Also if you would like to receive any back issues of our newsletters please contact Barbie at email address [floridabluebirds@aol.com](mailto:floridabluebirds@aol.com)

**Want to communicate with the Florida Bluebird Society, or simply have a bluebird question? Please visit our website**

**Website <http://floridabluebirdsociety.com/>**

**Or**

**Email: [floridabluebirdsociety@yahoo.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@yahoo.com)**

**Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Florida-Bluebird-Society/146994685328275>**

The Florida Bluebird Society is a registered IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICE BY CALLING TOLL-FREE WITHIN FLORIDA 800-435-7325.

REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.  
REGISTRATION NUMBER IS CH292P

Goodbye and see you next month!



Photo Courtesy of Debra Kuhnly