

# The Florida Bluebird



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## FBS Membership News

To streamline our procedures, August is the month when all Florida Bluebird Society annual memberships come due. The Florida Bluebird Society offers a number of membership categories, and trust you will find one that fits your budget.

The FBS extends a big THANK YOU to all of you who have already renewed your memberships, to those new members, and to those “special” members. We truly appreciate your continued backing. We also are grateful to those of you who decided to renew at an increased level of support.

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## Nest Cams Reveal Secrets of Nest Box

An Educational and Recreational Experience

Nest cams are powerful educational and recreational tools to reveal what goes on inside a bluebird nest box. In past seasons a bluebird was seen removing Carolina Chickadee eggs from a box; snakes were seen getting nestlings; and it has become obvious there is little rest for the female while brooding the eggs. It also has been reported that bluebirds inside the nest box sometimes flap their wings to cool the eggs. This has never been observed. Bluebirds have been seen sitting with their heads out of the opening and fanning their tails, perhaps cooling the eggs in this manner.

During the 2012 season the Penney Birders at the Penney Retirement Community in Penney Farms, Clay County, again sponsored two cams in bluebird nest boxes. Both nest cams could be accessed through buttons on the Florida Bluebird Society’s Home Page. With the bluebird season over, both cams now are off-line. The cams are scheduled to be turned back on in 2013.

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## FBS Membership News

If you have not already done so, we ask that you **please renew your membership today!** Memberships are available in the following categories:

Regular Membership - \$15.00  
Family Membership - \$25.00  
Patron/Organizational - \$50.00  
Sponsor - \$100.00  
Senior Membership (62 years or older) - \$10.00  
Student Membership - \$10.00  
Life Membership - \$400.00

If you did not receive a renewal notice, please notify us at [floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com).

Your continued support is essential to insure an uninterrupted continuation of our efforts to help conserve and protect the beautiful Eastern Bluebird in Florida.

The Florida thanks the following "special" members:

### **Patron**

David Foster - Jacksonville  
John and Diane Fye – Valrico

### **Sponsor**

Katie Sieving - Gainesville

### **Organizational**

BASCA. Inc.  
Gainesville Garden Club

The Florida Bluebird Society welcomes the following in the "nest"

Carolyn Brown	Penney Farms
Cheri Martin-Spray	Inverness
Nancy Romero	Penney Farms
Pat Shelly	Penney Farms
Elaine Unkles	Penney Farms

## Adding Up the Results; What do the Numbers Tell About the Past Season?

*by Bill Pennewill*

With 2012 bluebird nesting season now behind us this is a good time to review the results and begin planning for the 2013 season, which will be here before realize it.

To learn more about the health of the Eastern Bluebird population in Florida, it also is important that individuals monitoring nest boxes compile and submit requested information to the National Phenology Network. Detailed instructions on submitting the information to the NPN is available on the Florida Bluebird Society's home page, [floridabluebirdsociety.com](http://floridabluebirdsociety.com).

Information to be compiled and reported separately for each bluebird trail monitored is:

1. Report each bluebird trail separately and identify by location or number;
2. Location of bluebird nest box trial: GPS, county, town, address or location;
3. Year being summarized;
4. Type of habitat where trail located;
5. Number of bluebird nest boxes in trail;
6. Number of active bluebird nest boxes in trail
7. Date of first nest attempt;
8. Date first egg laid;
9. Date last egg laid;
10. Total eggs laid in all nest boxes in this trail;
11. Total number of hatchlings in this trail;
12. Total number of birds which fledged in this trail;
13. Date last bird fledged from nest boxes in this trail;
14. Total number of nestings in all nest boxes in this trail.

Also note in the comments section any observations of interest, such as predation, human interference, or supplemental feeding.

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## A Seasonal Summary

This, personally, has been a very successful year at the Penney Retirement Community, where each Monday a fellow resident and I monitored the 39 nest boxes scattered around campus, some near resident cottages or other structures and others on the golf course. Bluebirds occupied 33 houses; Carolina Chickadees raised one clutch in one house; and 5 of the houses had no activity,



Bluebird Eggs

When we started monitoring the last week in February nesting activity already was underway in 14 boxes. There were two complete nests, one almost complete nest and 11 boxes with a few pine needles. We also found

Carolina Chickadee nests in two boxes. A bluebird later built a nest over the chickadee nest containing five eggs.

The first eggs were laid the first week in March, with most eggs laid the third week in March. By the end of the month eggs had been laid in 15 of the nest boxes.



Female With Poop Sack

Carolina Chickadee eggs also had been laid in two of the houses. With the exception of two nests, when eggs were laid the last week in July, egg-laying activity ended the second week in July.

Bluebirds laid 332 eggs during 71 nesting attempts. Eighty-two of those eggs did not hatch; one hatchling found dead in nest; 249 bluebirds fledged; 5 Carolina Chickadees fledged. The last bluebirds fledged the third week in August.



## Nest Cams Reveal Nest Box Secrets

A brief summary of activities in the nest boxes in 2012 can be seen on the Florida Bluebird Society's Home Page ([floridabluebirdsociety.com](http://floridabluebirdsociety.com)). However the summary is incomplete and there are events which cannot be explained. Many times, even for days, the nest cam was not monitored. Power surges sometimes knocked a nest cam off-air, and there were delays in getting it restarted. Experience with the nest cams reveals that even when monitoring a nest weekly, we are not fully aware of all events inside a bluebird nest box.



## Something New in the Nest Box

by Bill Pennewill

Yes, this really is the Florida Bluebird Society's monthly newsletter!

Barbie Arms, who has served as corresponding secretary and editor of the newsletter almost from the creation of the FBS, reluctantly has been forced to relinquish her duties because of health issues.

Now the job of editing the newsletter has been handed to me. Because the FBS Board for some time had been discussing the idea of changing to a newsletter format, this was deemed a good time to experiment with the new concept.

I'm sure that in this inaugural issue you'll find things you like and things you don't like. So tell us what you think. Since this newsletter is for and about you, the members of the Florida Bluebird Society, send us your questions, comments, critiques, photographs. Can't promise we'll use them all. Of course, we reserve the right to edit anything before publishing it. Send submissions to: [floridabluebirdsociety@yahoo.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@yahoo.com).

# Comments and Questions from the Nest Box



Hi – I am very excited to join the Florida Bluebird Society. This is my first year as a bluebirder. Prior to moving to Citrus County three years ago, I lived in Tampa all my life and only saw bluebirds when visiting our family getaway cabin just outside of Dunnellion, on the river. I was so excited when I saw my first pair at my home, on Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. What a lucky day!

I am anxious to talk with other bluebird enthusiasts.

Thank you,

Cheri.

Mamma and one of the babies. Out of five that fledged, only two survived. They hatched day after Tropical Storm Debra. Mom and Dad were bringing them around every day for mealworms. But last Tuesday was the last time I saw them. Glad to get this pix.



Members of the Florida Bluebird Society talk to folks attending the Earthfest 2012 at *Arbor Day in the Great Outdoor* in Tusawilla Park in Ocala. The FBS volunteers staffing the display are Barbie Arms, left, and Elena Sachs, recording secretary.



Deb –

I have been monitoring a 50-box bluebird trail at Flatwoods Park in Tampa for 9 years. This year was disastrous for our baby birds because of the predation by raccoons and snakes. So we tried out 3 new types of predator guards, one being the cone that you show in your picture (in the August newsletter). All the cones failed to keep out predators. I consulted my copy of the Bluebird Monitor's Guide (A Cornell Bird Library Guide) and they say that unless your cone is 3 feet in diameter, a raccoon and/or large snake can easily get past it. We were very disappointed because they were expensive and we were trying to find a predator guard that worked with our wooden posts. Since we had no predation on the 8 inch stove pipes that we installed on 2 metal posts, we decided to build stove pipe guards on our wooden posts. We found out that the stove pipes must be bigger on the wooden posts, so we built our own 12 inch diameter stove pipe predator guards and installed 22 right away. The other 28 will be built and installed by an Eagle Scout this winter. We had trouble finding a 12 inch diameter stove pipe but were very lucky to have 50 donated by a local air conditioning company (Alert Air Conditioning, which my family has had a contract with for many years). Anyway, they work great and we are recognizing the air conditioning company at our next Tampa Audubon meeting. Attached is a picture of our 12 inch diameter predator guard.

Mary Miller



**Is it Safe Out There?**  
A baby bluebird peers out of a nest box prior to taking flight for the first time. The box was 1 of 2 with cams at the Penney Retirement Community.

Hello,

My husband and I just spotted the most beautiful bird at our feeder, and when we did an internet search to find out its name, we came across your site. I believe we had a Florida Bluebird at our feeder just now. Here are the details:

Day: August 21, 2012

Time: 5:35pm

Location: Central Merritt Island, Florida

Thanks for the great website and information! We will keep an eye out for the bluebird and may try to build a nesting box too.

Sincerely,  
Donna Genelin



The Florida Bluebird Society will have an exhibit at “Wings and Wildflowers”, Lake County, Florida’s inaugural birding festival. The Festival will be held September 28-30 at beautiful Hickory Point Park in Tavares. The FBS booth will be there on September 28 & 29. If you would be willing assist at our booth, please contact Faith Jones at [floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com)



Bluebird in left pix checks out area. Then, in center pix, bird checks out the box. Finally, in right pix. bird decides to examines inside of box. Ten birds fledged from box in 2012.

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