

# Florida Bluebird Society

**Dedicated to the Protection  
And Conservation of Bluebirds in Florida**



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## **7 Southern Counties Report Increase In Number of Bluebirds Reported Seen During FBS Fall 2012 Statewide Blitz**

The total number of bluebirds reported seen in seven southern counties during the Florida Bluebird Society's 2012 Fall Statewide Blitz continued its slightly upward trend.

At the same time the total number of bluebirds reported seen on November 16-17, 2012, the official count days, was down.

The seven southern counties -- Hardee, Highland, Glades, Lee, Palm Beach, Collier and Miami-Dade -- reported a total of nine bluebirds seen in November 2010. In November 2012 the number reported seen increased to 60. (see charts) Two of the seven counties -- Palm Beach

and Hardee -- reported seeing bluebirds this fall for the first time. Another county -- Miami-Dade -- had reported seeing bluebirds during the fall 2010 Blitz and none during the 2011 Blitz.

During the fall 2012 Blitz there were 453 bluebirds reported seen in 34 counties. In comparison, during the 2010 Fall Blitz there were 611 bluebirds reported seen in 29 counties and in the 2011 Fall Blitz there were 518 bluebirds reported seen in 34 counties.

Bluebirds were reported seen in 17 counties during all the Fall and Spring Blitzs since November 2010. Nine counties which had reported seeing

bluebirds in past Fall Blitzes did not report seeing bluebirds in the Fall of 2012. They were Alachua, Charlotte, Dixie, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hendry, Jackson, St. Johns and Suwannee. Lack of reports from these counties probably accounts for the decrease in the total number of bluebirds reported seen during the Fall of 2012 in comparison to past Fall reports. For instance during the Fall 2011 Blitz Alachua County reported 49 bluebirds seen and Gilchrist County reported 52 bluebirds seen.

The Florida Bluebird thanks those individuals who participated in the 2012

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The Florida Bluebird Society Is an Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society



## Spring 2013 Bluebird Blitz Set To Be Held April 5-6

The Florida Bluebird Society's Statewide Spring Bluebird Blitz will be held April 5-6.

The FBS will introduce two new reporting procedures for the Spring Blitz in an effort to increase the number of volunteers participating and to help facilitate the compilation of statistics. Reports from forms downloaded from the FBS web site now are filled out by Blitz participants and returned either by email or by the US mail. These reports then are entered manually into an Excel spread sheet, a herculean task.

Under the new trial system of reporting, prior to the Blitz members will receive an email with an Excel spread sheet attached. Sightings then are to be entered on the spread sheet and emailed back to the FBS. The returns then will be merged into one document. This is intended to replace the manual tabulation of reports with an electronic system.

Finally, bluebird sightings can be submitted to e-bird. These sighting then will be incorporated into the final Blitz report.

Following the Spring Blitz the FBS would welcome your feedback on this effort to streamline the reporting and compilation of your bluebird sightings.



## Welcome to the Nest

Ulla and Jerry Benny

Gainesville

Carol Cullen

Fort White

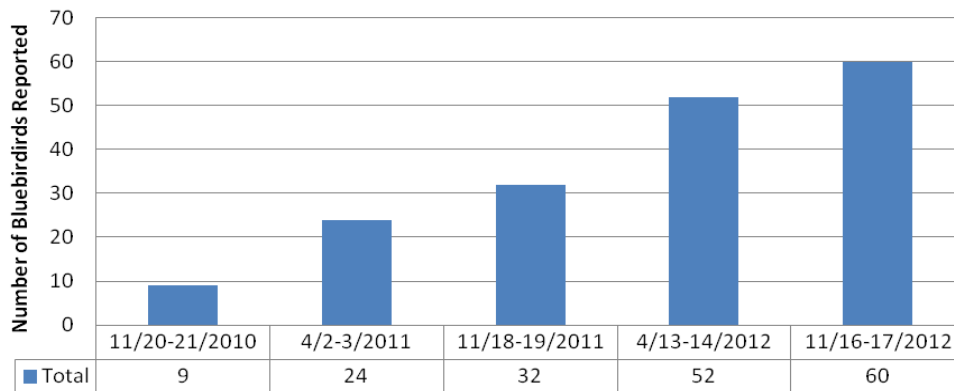
Lynn & Sandra Overstake

Penney Farms

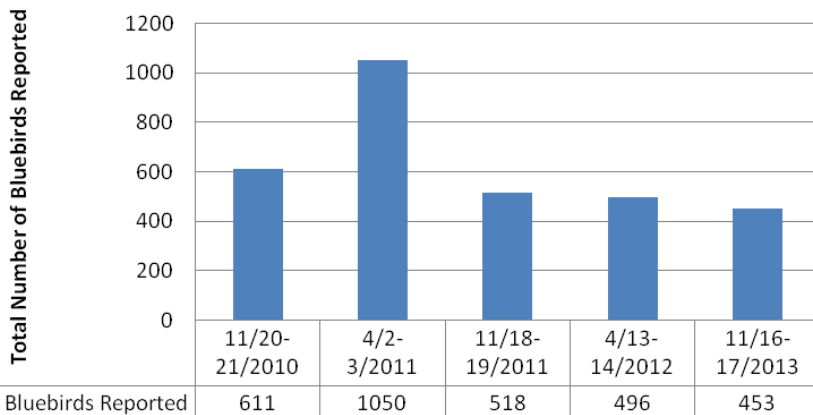
# Charts for FBS November 2012 Bluebird Blitz

		11/20-21/2010	4/2-3/2011	11/18-19/2011	4/13-14/2012	11/16-17/2012
Collier County		6	18	8	9	7
Glades County					5	3
Hardee County						5
Highlands County			5	23	38	22
Lee County			1	1		19
Miami-Dade County		3				2
Palm Beach County						2
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>60</b>

**Bluebirds Reported in 7 Southern Counties**



**Total Bluebirds Reported**



Top two charts on this page illustrate the increase in number of bluebirds reported seen in seven southern Florida Counties. Top chart displays sightings by counties. Middle chart illustrates the increase in the number of sightings in the seven southern Florida counties during past five Blitzes. Bottom chart illustrates the total number of sightings during past five FBS Blitzes.

# Studies Focus on Impact of Out-Door Cats

"Killer Kats" are on the loose in this country!

Yes, that lead-in sentence was intended to get your attention. Many cat-lovers probably will read no further before going into an emotional rage. But all bird-lovers -- particularly bluebirders -- should be alarmed at the recent spate of media stories reporting the widespread impact of out-door cats.

Florida does not escape the impact of free-roaming cats.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently published the *"Integrated Pest Management Plan for the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex."*

The plan includes trapping and removing "invasive exotic animal species," including free-roaming cats.

House cats which spend all or most of their time indoors are not considered to be free-roaming.

"Outdoor cats may also be considered pets or companion animals but are allowed by their owners to spend most of their time outside, have a home to go to for food and shelter, and are comfortable around people. Such outdoor cats are considered free-roaming and, may kill wildlife out of instinct or invoke avoidance behavior from prey species; Stray cats were either indoor or outdoor cats at one point in their life, but

their owners abandoned them and now they are free-roaming, feeding where they can on either wildlife or food left out by strangers.

"Feral cats are also free-roaming cats that are born to stray cats or other feral cats, and they feed



© Sandra Overstake

IS IT TIME TO EAT? -- Free-roaming house cat sits under bird feeder waiting to dine on an unsuspecting bird. Just yards away from the feeder is an active bluebird nest box.

on wildlife or on food left out by humans."

One question in a related "Question and Answer" article asks: "Why are cats an issue for wildlife?" The answer, in part:

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## Studies Focus on Impact of Out-Door Cats

"...Scientists estimate that every year in the United States free-roaming cats kill hundreds of millions of native birds and small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles, including species of conservation concern and more common species. Cats are recognized as a widespread and serious threat to the integrity of native

wildlife populations and natural ecosystems...."

The USFWS discounts the use of the trap-neuter-release program. "Often such cat colonies continue to grow because they may serve as dumping grounds for unwanted cats, and the food and water attracts more cats and wildlife such as raccoons and Key deer. TNR is not an option because it is illegal to feed wildlife or allow domestic animals to roam freely on National Wildlife Refuges. Additionally, even if a TNR program successfully maintained a stable number of cats, they are still likely to kill or injure native wildlife."

the mortalities of juveniles in the study. In two neighborhoods cats were the cause of nearly half the deaths..

The article states cats, may be driving the survival rates of juvenile birds in suburban areas and "are in a position to dramatically influence the success of bird populations."

Studies such as these led to a host of recent headlines:

"Cats claim billions of bird and small mammal victims annually; New estimate suggests felines take a big bite out of wildlife," *Science News*, February 23, 2013.

"Cats killing billions of animals in the US." *BBC News, Science and Environment*, January 29, 2013.

"Vermont Agency Recognizes Outdoor Cats' Threat to Wildlife," *The Birding Wire*, February 20, 2013.

The moral of the story: Should individuals who allows a cat to roam free out-of-doors -- whether a household pet or in feeding feral cats -- be held morally responsible for any birds those cats kill?

An excellent source of information on addressing this issue can be found at the American Bird Conservancy web site ([abcbirds.org](http://abcbirds.org)).

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### Seven Southern Counties Report More Bluebirds

Statewide Fall Blitz. The compilation of sightings during the Spring and Fall is one way in which the FBS seeks to determine both the health of the species in Florida and how the bluebird population fluctuates at different times of the year. The accuracy of this data rests on the shoulders of those volunteers who take the time to observe and report the number of bluebirds they see.

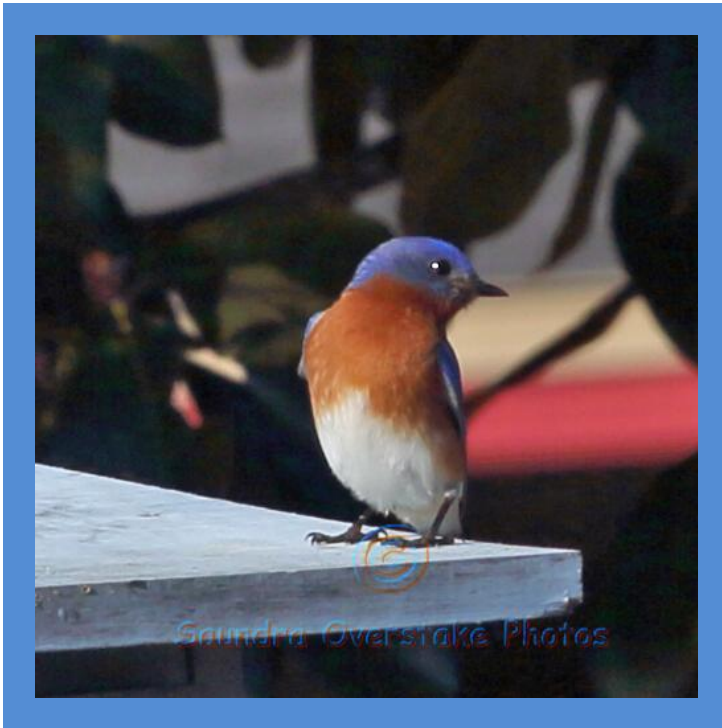
The complete listing of counties and number of bluebirds reported seen during both the Fall and Spring bluebird Blitzes since November 20-21, 2010, when official tallies were recorded, can be seen on the FBS website ([floridabluebirdsociety.com](http://floridabluebirdsociety.com)).

The USFWS is not alone in its concern about the impact of cats on birds and mammals. The headline of a story published by the Smithsonian National Zoological Park's Migratory Bird Center proclaimed : "*It's Catbirds vs. Cats...and the Cats are Winning.*"

Scientists from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and Towson University conducted a study in three suburban residential neighborhoods to determine the success of gray catbirds in areas with concentrated populations of people.

They found predators were responsible for 79 percent of

Bluebird pictures taken on campus of the Penney Retirement Community by Sandra Overstake



## Question about Birds in Keys

From: Stuart Barbour:

My sister and her husband just moved into their dream home on Key Marathon. I am known here in the Raleigh, NC, area for my unique but technical bluebird houses. Have aged pecky cypress ready to create a special bird house for their new place. Are there nesting bluebirds on Marathon or should I build for another bird type ?

Stuart,

Thanks for your interest in bluebirds and FBS. The Keys are outside of the confirmed breeding range of the Eastern Bluebird. Colleagues of mine re-introduced bluebirds to the pine forests in Everglades National Park about 6-8 years ago, but that population is still very small and hasn't spread, to my knowledge, anywhere south of the park into the Keys. If you want to see the nearest thriving population of breeding bluebirds, you can travel up to Big Cypress National Preserve (west of the Everglades). They are common there especially in areas that have been recently burned.

Perhaps you could put up nest boxes for the Great Crested Flycatcher, or much larger nest boxes for Eastern Screech-Owls. Both species breed in the Upper Keys.

Thanks, and good luck,

Karl Miller, FBS Board Member

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