

The Florida Bluebird Society

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



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FBS Spring Blitz Reports Record Highs, Drop in Bluebirds Seen

More Participants, More Counties, Fewer Bluebirds

The Florida Bluebird Society's Statewide Spring Bluebird Blitz produced two record highs and one disappointing low.

A new reporting method initiated for the 2013 Spring Bluebird Blitz April 5-6 may have contributed to both the record high 104 participants, which includes reports taken off e-bird, and the record high 43 counties where bluebirds were reported seen.

Despite the record 104 participants and 43 counties, the number of bluebirds reported seen dropped to 411 during the two-day Statewide

Spring Bluebird Blitz. The 2013 Spring report continues the downward trend for the past two Spring blitzes. In 2011, during the initial Spring blitz, 527 bluebirds were reported; 496 bluebirds were reported in the 2012 Spring blitz.

In an effort to increase the number of blitz participants the FBS introduced two new reporting procedures this Spring. In the past blitz participants down-loaded blank forms from the FBS website (floridabluebirdsociety.com). Following the blitz, participants returned the completed forms to Faith Jones, the FBS Treasurer, who manually compiled the reports.

In addition to continuing the past practice of manually compiling results, this Spring FBS members were sent an email with an Excel

spread sheet attached. Sightings then could be entered on the spread sheet and emailed back to the FBS and the results compiled electronically. In addition, bluebird sightings could be submitted to e-bird and incorporated into the final report.

The new reporting method received resounding approval from Jones. She said use of spread sheets made her job much easier. Anyone who has compiled reports from handwritten submissions can appreciate what an improvement electronic submissions can make. Jones also said she believes use of the electronic submissions reduced the chance of human error because the data

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Fewer Birds Seen During FBS Spring Blitz

did not have to be re-entered manually.

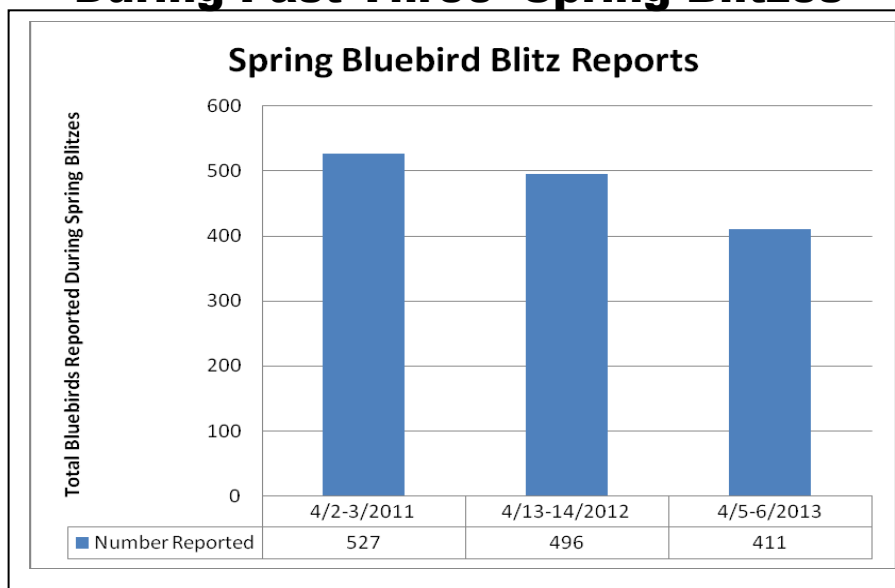
Use of the electronic submissions has launched the FBS on a project to explore use of Google forms to compile seasonal nest box summaries electronically. The FBS had been working with the National Phenology Network to compile seasonal summaries, but was unable to merge the informational needs of the FBS with the NPN system, which many individuals said they found difficult to use. When the seasonal summary spread sheet is finalized it will be emailed to all FBS members and others desiring to participate in the program. This will give participants the opportunity to compile information throughout the nesting season, which will make completing the summary much easier.

Observations gleaned from the Spring 2013 Statewide Bluebird Blitz include:

Bluebirds were reported in 10 counties for the first time during the 2013 Spring blitz. Counties and bluebirds reported -- Bay (13); Brevard (4); Hardee (3); Indian River (2); Jackson (4); Miami-Dade (2); Okeechobee (1); Putnam (2); Taylor (4); and Washington (2).

In comparing the 2013 Spring blitz to the past two blitzes, more bluebirds were reported in 12 counties; in 28 counties fewer or none were reported; and bluebirds have never been reported in 17 counties.

Comparison of Bluebird Sightings During Past Three Spring Blitzes



Alachua	4	11	27
Baker		1	
Bay			13
Brevard			4
Charlotte	4	4	7
Citrus		22	32
Clay	26	50	28
Collier	18	9	21
Dixie		1	
Columbia	1		
Duval	31	9	30
Escambia	55	1	14
Flagler		5	1
Franklin		3	4
Glades		5	
Hardee			3
Hernando	23	4	12
Highlands	5	38	13
Hillsborough	84	6	18
Indian River			2
Jackson			4
Jefferson	5		1
Lake	59	8	5
Lee	1		3
Leon	49	16	20

Levy	4		7
Manatee	2		1
Marion	6	52	
Martin	2	11	3
Miami-Dade			2
Nassau	12	1	23
Okaloosa	1	6	7
Okeechobee			1
Orange	28	16	6
Osceola	2	5	14
Pasco	13	102	12
Pinellas	4	55	7
Polk	14	22	5
Putnam			2
Santa Rosa	10	2	3
Sarasota	3	4	7
Seminole	7	4	9
St Johns	16	2	13
Sumter	32		
Suwannee	2		
Taylor			4
Volusia		10	1
Wakulla	3	3	7
Walton	1	8	13
Washington			2

News Articles Bring Results

Publicity Pay!

That's a lesson Candace Bridgewater and the Florida Bluebird Society had driven home during the Spring 2013 Statewide Bluebird Blitz.

Bridgewater has been instrumental in establishing bluebird trails in Nassau County. In order to help promote the 2013 Spring Blitz, Bridgewater sent releases to local newspapers. As a result the NEWS News Leader published an article, "Bluebird Blitz this weekend," in its April 5 edition and the Clay Today published an article, "'Bluebird Blitz' Coming" in its April 4 edition.

Evidently the notices brought results. Nassau County's Blitz count jumped to 23 this spring, compared to one bluebird reported during the 2012 Blitz and 12 during the 2011 Blitz.

As an added note, Bridgewater said, "At Amelia we have four of four boxes occupied by bluebirds -- 100 percent; still 75 percent in Pace Island, but I'm confident. So (much) fun."

Moral of the story: the more we get our message out the more people will participate.



Unique Placement of Bluebird Nest Box; Has Anyone Ever Tried This in the Past?

The following was received from Barbie Arms, who for many years faithfully served as Corresponding Secretary for the Florida Bluebird Society, but is in the process of relocating to Georgia.

I have never seen or heard of this before and would like to hear from others who may have experimented with this placement of a nest box.

I want to share with you what I saw on my way back from Georgia looking at houses.

There was a house with a small lake in front of it and there was a bluebird box on a pole in the water about 6 feet from the edge and a few tall bushes at the water's edge. They were definitely close enough for the fledglings to reach.

I never saw that before!

My initial thought was that is brilliant!!! I imagine it was anchored down in a heavy concrete slab. The pole did have a baffle so I imagine snakes that can swim might have a tougher time navigating the water and trying to get up the wet pole. Same with raccoons and other critters. Of course it eliminates the ant problem!

The only problem I would imagine is when the birds fledge they need to be able to fly the six feet to the bush on the lake's edge. I think, though, that the occasional casualty if

the fledgling falls in the water (unless mom could carry him off to land) would be less than the critters that devastate the entire clutch.

What do you think? When we move to Georgia I am going to experiment with this scenario and see how things go. I think this could be an exciting experiment. The bluebirds fly into their box, who says they care about water below?

Since I also raise butterflies I will hire a landscaper to set up my yard with nectar flowers and larval host plants. I will also see if we can come up with a design to have the pole in water and have small trees or bushes close by. Craft stores sell cement mix to make stepping stones so I can make the cement base to hold the pole erect in the water. If there is a way to get power to the little pond with a pump I can have it as a water garden also. I think this will be a great experiment without harming any birds; they will either use the house or not.

It is likely that up to 70% of all bluebirds die before their first birthday. Most adult bluebirds live only a few years, while a small number live up to four or five years. The oldest recorded eastern bluebird was 10 years old - The Conservation Guardians of Northwest Illinois.



WE NEED YOU

You can help make a difference!

The Florida Bluebird Society is dedicated to 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.

These are the opening words of the Florida Bluebird Society's Mission Statement.

But they remain meaningless words on a piece of paper unless you -- the membership -- are willing to help make them take flight.

The Florida Bluebird Society is not a faceless, formless organization. It is made up of people who are willing to say, "Yes, I want to help. I want to participate in an organization dedicated to learning more about bluebirds in Florida and in sharing that information with others."

"But what can I do?" you ask. The answer is simple and depends on the time and effort you want to invest. You can volunteer to serve on the board and participate in teleconferences held every other month; volunteer to serve as an officer, including Vice-President, Corresponding Secretary, or Recording Secretary. As a board member you could head one of the many necessary committees, such as Communications, Bluebird Research, Public Relations, or Historian.



Welcome to the Nest

Joseph Olson

Dunnellon

John (Mike) Kell

New Port Richey



FBS Funds Bluebird Research

The Florida Bluebird Society offers an annual research grant to help fund programs devoted to learning more about bluebirds in the Sunshine State.

The FBS offers the grant in keeping with its mission to further conservation and preservation of bluebirds in Florida. The FBS also is dedicated to helping collect and make information available to bluebird enthusiasts, whether individuals who have maintained large trails for many years or folks just getting started with one bluebird nest box. All research funded by FBS grants must be conducted in the State of Florida and be primarily intended to further knowledge about ecology and conservation of Eastern Bluebirds or other federally protected cavity nesting species in Florida.

The \$2,500 FBS Research Grant will be awarded yearly, depending on funds available. The Research Grant can be awarded to one or several

applicants, depending on objectives and significance of the proposal submitted.

Priority will be given to applications received from individuals or organizations with a demonstrated interest and ability in conducting research beneficial to or expanding knowledge of Eastern Bluebirds in Florida. Applicants must be members of the Florida Bluebird Society at the time the grant is submitted. Sole decision on awarding grants will be the prerogative of the Florida Bluebird Society. The FBS's decision will be final and binding.

Grants will be for a one-year period, but may be renewed yearly for extended research projects, depending on funds available. Grant applications are due by December 31 to be considered for the following year. The FBS will make every effort to announce awarding of grants by the following March. Grant applications are available on the FBS web site - floridabluebirdsociety.com.

Oversize Chick in Nest; What is it?



David Williamson, of Geneva, in Seminole County, found this unusual looking nestling in his nest box. He believes there were five bluebird eggs in the box and isn't certain if he can't see them all or if this bird hatched out of one of them. He said it doesn't resemble any of the cowbird chicks he looked at on-line.

THE FBS WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHER FOLKS WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE YOUR NEST BOX. SEND US YOUR PIX AND WE'LL PUBLISH THEM IN THE NEWSLETTER AS SPACE IS AVAILABLE.

Albino Bluebird



This series of photos of a pure white -- or albino -- bluebird was submitted to the Florida Bluebird Society by Karen Collins.

Collins first reported the all-white nestling in an excited e-mail in April. "OMG. I have an albino baby!"

Asked if she has seen the all-white bluebird after it fledged, Collins said earlier this month, "I have only seen 3 of the 5 and the albino wasn't one of them."

This is the first bluebird of this kind that has been reported to the FBS. The FBS would be interested in learning if anyone else in Florida has had an all-white bluebird nestling.



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