

# The Florida Bluebird Society

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



Volume 3, Issue 6

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## 598 Bluebirds Reported Seen During FBS' 2013 Fall Blitz

A total of 598 Eastern Bluebirds were reported seen in 37 counties in Florida during the Florida Bluebird Society's Fall Statewide Bluebird Blitz held November 8-9, 2013.

The total number includes sightings reported to the FBS and those listed on Ebird.

First-time sightings were received from four counties. The counties and number of bluebirds reported were: Gadsden, 1; Gulf, 3; Hamilton, 3; and Monroe, 1. This was the first fall sighting reported in Putnam County (6).

Five counties reported a record number of sightings. The counties and the number of sightings reported were: Alachua, 55; Charlotte, 13; Collier, 36; Duval, 70; and Seminole, 24. Two counties - Bay (7) and Citrus (13) reported high Fall sightings.

Duval's 70 sightings were the highest number reported by any county during this Blitz. The 37 counties are the highest number in which Fall



One of 598 Bluebirds seen during Florida Bluebird Society's 2013 Fall Blitz.

sightings were reported, and second only to the 43 counties in which sightings were reported in the Spring 2013 Blitz.

The 598 sightings were the second highest number

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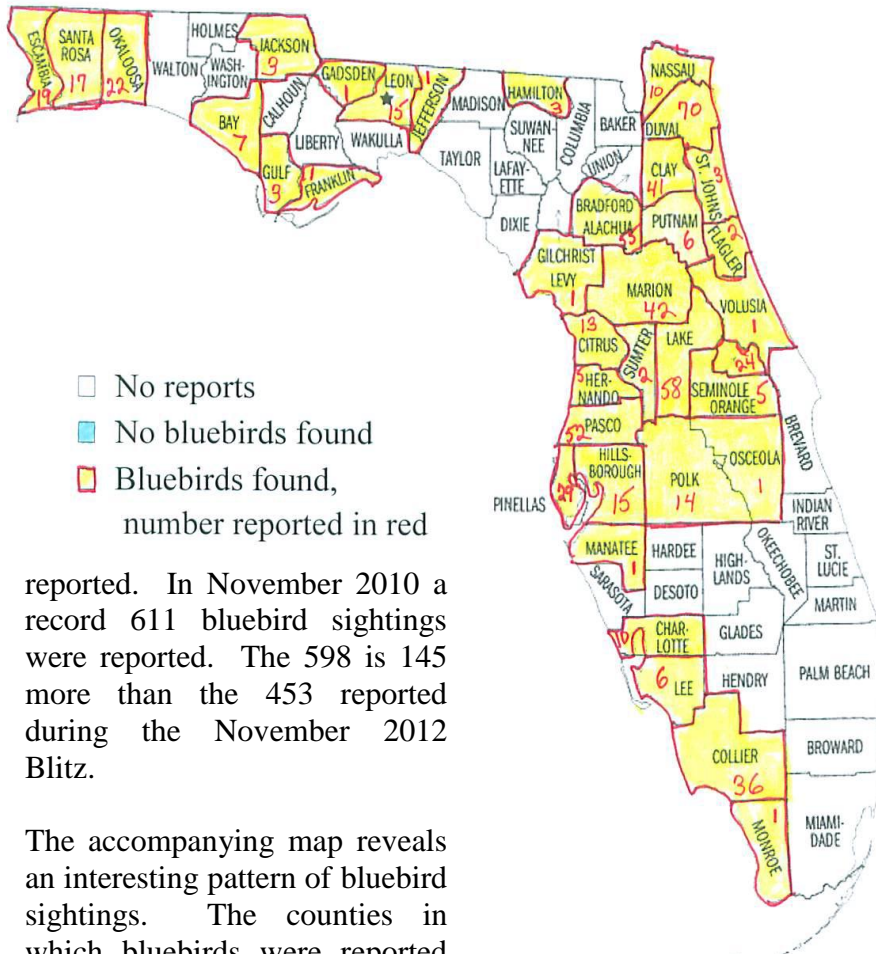
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# Bluebirds Seen in 37 Counties

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November 2013  
Statewide Bluebird Blitz Results



reported. In November 2010 a record 611 bluebird sightings were reported. The 598 is 145 more than the 453 reported during the November 2012 Blitz.

The accompanying map reveals an interesting pattern of bluebird sightings. The counties in which bluebirds were reported seen are clustered in the upper northeast part of the state, and with the exception of Sarasota, stretch unbroken down the Gulf Coast to Monroe, one of the four counties with first-time sightings. Bluebird sightings were reported in Escambia County -- in the western-most part of the Panhandle -- and in Nassau County -- in the extreme northeast part of Florida -- and in Monroe County -- in the southernmost tip of the Peninsula. All the FBS needs are bluebird sightings in the Keys to call Florida a "Bluebird State."

The Florida Bluebird Society

thanks all those individuals who participated in the 2013 Fall Statewide Bluebird Blitz. As more individuals participate in this twice-yearly event, the FBS will begin to get a more complete picture on the health of the species in Florida and how the bluebird population fluctuates at different times of the year.

See accompanying chart (Pages 3 and 4) for listing of all Blitz bluebird sightings.

The dates for the Spring Blitz -- normally held the first or second week in April -- have not yet been determined.

## FBS Schedules 2 Area Meetings

The Florida Bluebird Society has scheduled two area meetings for present and past members of the Society and their guests in February. The first will be at the Central Ridge Library, 425 W. Roosevelt Blvd., in Beverly Hills, on Saturday, Feb 1, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The second will be in the Orange Park Branch of the Clay County Public Library, 2054 Plainfield Ave., Orange Park, on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The meetings will give participants an opportunity to share experiences and provide input into the operation of the FBS.

The Beverly Hills meeting will include Levy, Marion, Citrus, Hernando, Sumter, Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough counties. Participants will be guests of the FBS for a pizza lunch and will be invited to tour the Withlacoochie Bluebird Trail in Ft. Cooper. Participants also will be given a free bluebird nest box made by Louis Nipper, an FBS board member.

The Orange Park meeting will open with a "meet-and-greet" session and end with a "brown bag" luncheon. Equipment will be available for participants to share their photos. The meeting will include the eight counties surrounding Clay.

## Florida Bluebird Society's Spring and Fall Bluebird Blitz Responses

### Total number of bluebirds reported by county

	11/20- 21/2010	4/2- 3/2011	11/18- 19/2011	4/13- 14/2012	11/16- 17/2012	4/5- 6/2013	11/8- 9/2013
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Alachua County	19	4	49	11		27	55
Baker County				1	2		
Bay County			1		4	13	7
Bradford County							
Brevard County						4	
Broward County							
Calhoun County							
Charlotte County		4	4	4		7	10
Citrus County				22	3	32	13
Clay County	37	26	6	50	41	28	41
Collier County	6	18	8	9	7	21	36
Columbia County	75	1	28		58		
DeSoto County							
Dixie County			14	1			
Duval County	11	31	23	9	11	30	70
Escambia County	11	55	14	1	21	14	19
Flagler County	9		1	5		1	2
Franklin County	1			3		4	1
Gadsden County							1
Gilchrist County	4		52				
Glades County				5	3		
Gulf County							3
Hamilton County							3
Hardee County					5	3	
Hendry County			2				
Hernando County	11	23		4	20	12	5
Highlands County		5	23	38	22	13	
Hillsborough County	35	84	21	6	18	18	15
Holmes County							
Indian River County						2	
Jackson County			6			4	3
Jefferson County	3	5			5	1	1
Lafayette County							
Lake County	93	59	33	8	13	5	58
Lee County		1	1		19	3	6

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	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Leon County							
Levy County	3	4	16		12	7	1
Liberty County							
Madison County	1						
Manatee County	1	2				1	1
Marion County	10	6	64	52	26		42
Martin County		2		11		3	
Miami-Dade County	3				2	2	
Monroe County							1
Nassau County	14	12	4	1	2	23	10
Okaloosa County	33	1	8	6	37	7	22
Okeechobee County						1	
Orange County	31	28	3	16	4	6	5
Osceola County	10	2	5	5	10	14	1
Palm Beach County					2		
Pasco County	79	13	20	102	11	12	52
Pinellas County	25	4	30	55	8	7	32
Polk County	14	14	3	22	5	5	14
Putnam County						2	6
Santa Rosa County	31	10	15	2	16	3	17
Sarasota County	3	3		4		7	
Seminole County		7		4	3	9	24
St. Johns County		16	4	2		13	3
St. Lucie County							
Sumter County		32	9		16		2
Suwannee County		2	8				
Taylor County						4	
Union County							
Volusia County			26	10	8	1	1
Wakulla County	2	3	1	3	1	7	
Walton County		1		8	12	13	
Washington County			1			2	
Total Reported	611	527	518	496	453	411	598

# Molt - When Bluebirds Decide It's Time "To Dress" Up In A New Set of Feathers

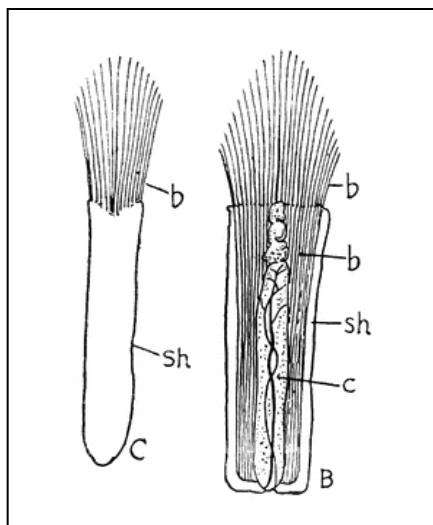
By Faith Jones, FBS Treasurer

Adapted From An Article by Roger Grimshaw in the Seminole Audubon newsletter, "The Jay."

Molt is the process of shedding feathers which are then replaced with new feathers. Molt is actually defined as the growing of new feathers.

Feathers are a unique characteristic of birds. Songbirds have about 2000 feathers. There are two principal types of feathers, downy (plumulaceous) and contour (pennaceous). When discussing molt, we are talking about contour feathers. There are a number of contour feather types which are located on different parts of the body, and serve different purposes. Feathers are attached to the skin in tracts (pterylae). The tracts are in patches on the skin which are controlled by muscles. This arrangement provides control over feather movement which is required for preening, temperature regulation, and display.

Feathers develop in a relatively hard sheath or "pin" that protects the follicle. This protective sheath is essential to safe guard the developing feathers. As each feather grows it emerges from the sheath and spreads to its full width. The sheath then flakes off from the base of the feather. Darker feathers are stronger than pale



B. very young feather within its sheath (sh.); c., the core of dermis; b., the barbs.  
C., the same, external view." -Thomson, 1916

ones, but all feathers wear out. Most songbirds replace each of their feathers once a year, usually at the end of their nesting season.

Songbird nestlings have more downy (plumulaceous) feathers on top than underneath, probably for protection. Juvenile plumage, their first pennaceous feathers, grows in all over the body, sometimes in different phases that seem to correspond to the nestling's expanding body. The tail feathers tend to be last to grow in fully. Wing

feathers grow in early as nestling's energy is better directed to wing feathers which are most important for escape from predators. The tail is less important in this respect, and can grow in later.

In a lecture given by Kenn Kaufman at the Audubon Field Ornithology camp I attended last summer, I learned the difference between the terms "juvinal" and "juvenile". Historically, North American ornithologists have used the term "juvinal" to describe a bird's first coat of non-downy feathers, the plumage in which a bird leaves the nest. The term "juvenile" describes the bird. "Juvinal" describes the plumage, and "juvenile" refers to the bird. European ornithologists have always used the term "juvenile" to describe both the plumage and the bird.

Most ornithologists now agree that as long as we realize "juvenile" is not the same as "immature" or "subadult", it is acceptable to use "juvenile" for the plumage and the bird.

Many songbird's juvenile plumage, the one in which they leave the nest, is distinctive from adult plumage. Many songbirds that

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# Molt - When Birds Decide To Change Into A "New Suit of Feathers"

First-Year Bluebird



Florida Bluebird Society Photo

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have plain, unmarked breasts as adults, have patterned breasts in juvenile plumage. The feathers that comprise this juvenile plumage are relatively soft and weak. They are held for a relatively short period before being replaced in a partial molt. This molt from juvenile to "formative" plumage replaces the feathers of the head, body and upper wing coverts with stronger

feathers. It is only a partial molt as the feathers of the wings and tail are not replaced. I am sure you have notices that young bluebirds may have spotty and brown bodies, but their wing and tail feathers have blue in them, similar to an adult bird.

This is a special molt that occurs only in their first year. The plumage developed at this point, usually near the end of summer, will stay with them

until they are about one year old. At that point they enter the adult cycle of molt which is then repeated every year thereafter. All bluebird species follow this "complex basic molt strategy".

I attempted to make this a very basic explanation of the molt process. If this topic is of interest to you, I suggest you research the Humphries-Parkes (H-P) system of terms and definitions developed in 1959 which focus on plumages and the molts themselves. Steve Howell has made some positive refinements to the H-P system in his numerous articles and his book, *Molt in North American Birds*.

Faith Jones

#### References

1. Howell, Steve N.G. *Molt in North American Birds*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York, 2010.
2. Kaufman, Kenn. *Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding: Understanding What You See and Hear*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York

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