

Florida Bluebird Society



Dedicated to the protection and conservation of bluebirds in Florida

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Photo by Judy Black

This unusual bluebird was seen in Spring Hill, Hernando County, in December and January.

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Leucistic Bluebird

In December, a white bluebird was seen in Spring Hill, in Hernando County. By the size, shape, behavior, and faint color pattern we know this to be an Eastern bluebird. But what went wrong for this bird, and why does it not have normally colored feathers?

You are no doubt familiar with albinism, the genetic condition that affects all pigments. An albino bird has no pigment in its feathers, skin, or eyes. Their eyes, legs, feet and bill appear pink or reddish due to the visibility of their blood vessels. Albino birds usually do not survive for long as they have lost any camouflage provided by their normal feather colors and are therefore very visible to predators. Their white feathers are weaker, and do not last as long as feathers with pigment. If they do survive to maturity, they have difficulty attracting a mate. As a result, the recessive gene for albinism is less likely to be passed on to the next generation.

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WELCOME

to the nest!

New Members

Marguerite Elmore Jacksonville

Emily Rizzo Millerton PA

Found a Baby Bird ?

Generally, if you find a baby animal it is best to **leave it alone**. Often the animal is not orphaned and the parent may be out getting food. Never pick up baby animals and remove them from their natural environment.

Not sure what to do? Check for information on line, or call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. For a list of licensed wildlife rehabilitator in your area please visit this web site

<http://wildliferehabber.com/rehabber-location-listings/us/fl>



Unusual Find in a Nest Box

This nest box was found near Inverness on the Withlacoochee Trail. A bluebird had obviously built a nest, and laid eggs. A chickadee then built a nest over the top of the bluebird eggs, and laid seven eggs of its own!

Leucistic Bluebird

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If you take a close look at the photo, you will note that this bird is not an albino. It has normal colored eyes, legs, feet and bill. This bird has a genetic mutation which has resulted in leucism, a condition that affects the pigment in feathers. Some birds will display patches of white feathers, as demonstrated in the red-winged blackbird in the photo. Others will display a pale version of the normal color pattern for their species. A third way leucism manifests is with overall white plumage, as seen in the bluebird sighted in Spring Hill. Leucistic birds can face the same survival challenges as albino birds.



Photo by Ken Schmidt

Leucistic birds are often a surprising sight as you do not expect to see a bluebird, a crow or a Northern cardinal with white patches of feathers. Our neighbors have an easily identifiable leucistic cardinal that comes to their feeder. This bird had been nicknamed “Cruella De Vil” as it has white feathers on one side of its crown.

We know that leucism is caused by a genetic mutation, but there are still a lot of questions regarding this condition which are yet to be answered. Are there external factors that may cause or increase the instance of these mutations? One report I

read indicated exposure to pesticides and herbicides may attribute to this mutation. Are the number of leucistic birds increasing? Or, are there more reports because the popularity of birdwatching has greatly increased and there are more people watching birds? Further research is needed to answer these and the many other questions regarding leucism.

Faith Jones

DO YOU HAVE ANY INTERESTING OR UNIQUE BLUEBIRD PHOTOS?
*If you are willing to let us use them in the newsletter, please e-mail them to
rbbarnhart47@gmail.com*



Nest Box Monitoring Tips

FBS recommends you check no more than once a week. Opening a nest box too often can cause the birds stress and lead to failed nests.

Do all possible to ensure the safety and well-being of the birds. The first principle of monitoring a nest box is that no observation should jeopardize the safety and well-being of the birds. All activities associated with the bluebird nesting box should be done as quickly, quietly, and carefully as possible.

When monitoring nest boxes strive to avoid stressing the birds, and do everything possible to ensure the least amount of impact upon the birds.

With nesting season in full swing, we thought it an appropriate time to remind

everyone of the FBS Principles and Nest Box Monitoring Protocol that all members should follow. This information is located on our web site under General Information – “Nest Box Protocol”

Cornell Lab of Ornithology is also a good source of information. Their Code of Conduct is located at nestwatch.org/learn/how-to-nestwatch/code-of-conduct

FBS T-shirts

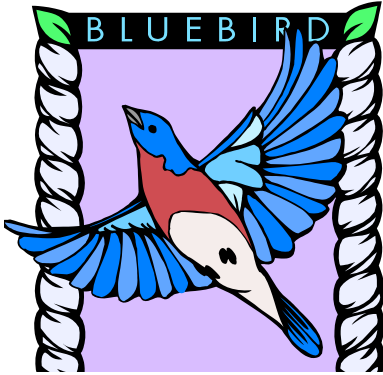
FBS has t-shirts available in two styles. They are available with our logo, designed by Ce Worley, or with Glenda Simmon's bluebird photo.

The men's style shirts are white, preshrunk cotton. They are available in sizes medium, large, or extra-large. The shirts seem to run a little small, so if there is any doubt you may want to go with a larger size.



Shirts can be obtained by sending a request to floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com. They are available for a \$10.00 donation plus \$3.50 shipping. They can be paid for by check or via PayPal.





Q & A

At our Area Meetings we include a Question and Answer session. This is a

questions that has been asked a number of times, and this is our best answer.

Question:

How much space should there be between bluebird nest boxes?

Answer:

Bluebirds are very territorial. With certain exceptions their nest boxes must be placed at least 100 yards apart.

You've built your box, you put on the predator guard, and you put it in the right place and some bluebirds decided to call it home. Excited by the success of your first box, you decide to put up another one. Where to you put it? That's the question.

Bluebirds are very territorial. They will fight to keep other bluebirds out of their territory. How far apart should the nest boxes be?

The Florida Bluebird Society recommends that the boxes be at least 100 yards apart. That is the length of a football field. And that's being conservative. The North American Bluebird Society strongly recommends that bluebird nest boxes be at least 125 yards apart.

If you put nest boxes too close together a couple of things may happen. The best thing that could happen is that one is used, meaning the other box is being

wasted. When you put up a bluebird nest box close to where there already is one it is not uncommon for bluebirds to nest in the new box at the beginning of the season and the old box to be empty; but at the end of the season the new box may be empty and to have bluebirds nested in the old box. Had there been only one box, it is likely that the bluebirds would have nested both times in the same box.

But the worst thing that can happen when nest boxes are placed too close together is that both pair of bluebirds give up on the fight and both nest boxes remain unused. So remember: another iron-clad rule is that nest boxes must be at least 100 yards apart. That's the length of a football field. Or, the length of a 100 yard tape.

An additional consideration for nest box location is "feeding area". We have found that even if nest boxes are placed at the four corners of a field several acres in size, and each nest box was at least 100 yards from any other box, all of the nest boxes may not be utilized because the birds are trying to feed in the same area. When two of the boxes were eliminated the remaining two boxes were both used.

What experience have you had with multiple nest boxes? We would like to hear of your stories from around Florida.

Bill Pennewill



Send Questions to

floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com

Spring Statewide Bluebird Blitz

The FBS Spring Blitz was held on April 4 and 5. A Blitz is a concentrated effort on a specific target date to locate as many Eastern bluebirds in your locale as possible.

The results are still being compiled, but so far we have reports from thirty counties.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the Spring Blitz!

Nest Cameras

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 have been observed taking eggs and nestlings. It becomes obvious there is little rest for the female while brooding eggs. It also has been reported that bluebirds inside the nest box sometimes flap their wings to cool the eggs. This would never have been observed without a camera in the nest box. Bluebirds have also been seen sitting with their heads out of the opening and fanning their tails. Perhaps she was cooling the eggs in this manner.

You might want to put a nest camera on your "wish list" for next season. They will provide you with an amazing window into the wild kingdom



Upcoming Events

Tuesday April 15, 10:00 a.m. Divas Circle of the Jacksonville Garden Club Club members will visit the Penney Retirement Community, Penney Farms, for a bluebird program and tour of their bluebird trail. For information contact Bill Pennewill, FBS President, at floridabluebirdsociety@yahoo.com.

Wednesday April 23, 11:30 a.m. Amelia Island Garden Interest Group. Bill Pennewill, President, will do a presentation on bluebirds in Florida. Details available at floridabluebirdsociety@yahoo.com

Saturday August 16, 2014 Florida Bluebird Society Annual Meeting
This late morning meeting will be held at the Cornerstone Baptist Church, Inverness. Details will be announced at a later date.

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