

# The Florida Bluebird Society

Dedicated to the Protection  
And Conservation of Bluebirds in Florida



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## Ready or Not, the New Year Means A New Bluebird Season About to Begin

It's a new year and a new bluebird season is just about to take wing.

Ready or not, bluebirds already seem to be checking out nest boxes scattered around the campus of the Penney Retirement Community (PRC), in Clay County, just outside Jacksonville, where I have monitored a bluebird trail for the past nine years.

Prior to 2013 weekly monitoring of the 39 nest boxes on the trail traditionally began the last Monday in February. Because completed nests were being found, monitoring then was begun the first week in February. While rain frequently interferes with the weekly monitoring in February, it is not unusual to find incomplete nests sometimes by the middle of the month. In 2013 two completed nests were recorded on February 25. There were no completed nests recorded in February 2014.

Residents at PRC are given a great deal of latitude in pursuing their



### The New Season About to Start

own interests. This allows bluebird nest boxes to be placed on the nine-hole executive golf course and in yard areas throughout the cottage areas if the occupants request or don't object to them. PRC is a continuing-care retirement community, so residents will move from a cottage to assisted living. When this happens, the

resident moving into the vacant cottage may not want a bluebird nest box in their yard area. As a result the number of bluebird boxes in the trail is in a state of flux.

Despite efforts to discourage the practice, residents sometimes put up their own bluebird nest boxes, which may be too close to an existing nest box. One box which regularly produced three nestings every year remained empty the past two years. Speculation centered on an undiscovered nest box nearby or on the super-abundance of mockingbirds which nest on campus.

The yearly territorial battle between mockingbirds and bluebirds can be interesting and educational. There are several boxes where the outcome remains in doubt each season. One year the bluebirds win; the next year the mockingbirds take over. Unfortunately the mockingbirds

*Continued on Page 02*

*Continued from Page 01*

# New Bluebird Season About to Take Wing

also win after the nesting season has gotten underway. Then the nest remains empty or the eggs unhatched.

Another nest box is in the garden in the vicinity of a grape arbor. For years netting was placed over the arbor to keep birds from getting the grapes. This past season reflectors were hung along the arbor to keep the birds away. It worked. After the first nesting the bluebirds abandoned the box, which in past years had some interesting results.

So, the first week in January, the yearly inspection of the nest boxes was made, including an inspection of the garden to see if the next box could be relocated. All boxes

were checked to see if any needed to be repaired, replaced, relocated or removed because they had been consistently unproductive. The condition of the predator guards, was checked and the boxes opened to see if any unwanted “critters” may have taken up residence in them during the winter months.

During the inspection it was surprising to find pine needles in a number of the boxes, although at the end of the past season all nesting material was removed from the boxes. Right or wrong, the pine needles were removed from the boxes.

It was interesting see bluebirds sitting on top of next box posts or

hanging out in trees or large bushes near the nest boxes.

After the trail has been finally established for the season monitoring sheets will be prepared for each box.

Ibuttons, scientifically accurate thermometers about the size of two stacked nickels, have been activated and are scheduled to be placed in and under seven next boxes before the end of January. The Ibuttons are being used to see if there is any correlation between the high and low temperatures and the nesting activities in the seven boxes.

After all has been done, it’s time to enjoy the unexpected discoveries of a new nesting season.

*Bill Pennewill, Founding President  
Florida Bluebird Society  
Editor, FBS Newsletter*

## Sample Monitoring Form



YEAR _____						
Month _____						
Box Number	DATE	NEST STATUS	NUMBER OF EGGS	LIVE YOUNG	DEAD YOUNG	YOUNG STATUS
LOCATION:						
Comments:						
Management Activity:						
Adult Activity:						
Young Status:						
Expected Hatch Date:				Expected Fledge Date:		

# I'll have a blue Christmas

by

Cheri Martin-Spray, President  
Florida Bluebird Society

While many were dreaming of a white  
Christmas, I would rather have had a  
blue Christmas.

*You can have the cold and the snow,*

*But I would rather have a blue Christmas, don't  
you know.*

*You can build your snowman, and take a  
downhill ski*

*It's a blue Christmas for me*

*Enjoy your sleigh rides, hot cocoa and tea*

*It's a blue Christmas, for me*

*And "why?" you say, would you rather be blue*

*The answer should be perfectly clear, my dear*



## FBS Schedules Area Meetings In Jan. and Feb.

The Florida Bluebird Society has scheduled a number of meetings throughout the state in January and February.

Meetings scheduled in January, two of them on the same day, are:

Wednesday, January 28, 11:00 a.m. to noon, Homassassa Public Library, 4100 South Greandmarch Ave., Homassassa, FL 34446-1120, Phone (352) 628-5626;

Wednesday, January 28, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., Central Ridge Library, 425 West Roosevelt Blvd., Beverly Hills, FL 34465-4281, Phone (352) 746-6622; and

Saturday, January 31, 11:00 a.m. to noon, Lakes Region Library, 1511 Druid Road, Inverness, FL 34452-4507, Phone (352) 726-2357.

As additional information on the above meetings is available it will be posted on the FBS website ([floridabluebirdsociety.com](http://floridabluebirdsociety.com)).

The FBS will hold an informal meeting for anyone interested in talking about bluebirds in the Orange Park Library, 2054 Plainfield Rd., Orange Park, on Saturday, February 21, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. This primarily will be a social event and will give individuals attending an opportunity to meet with other bluebird enthusiasts, share their photos and bluebird experiences, and ask questions. Refreshments will be served.

The FBS also is ironing out details on a meeting to be held in Tallahassee on February 28.

# They're obviously not bluebirds, But they're still very beautiful

The Florida Bluebird Society received this email from Glenda Simmons on November 11, 2014. Glenda, a member of the FBS who lives in Tallahassee, is noted for her outstanding bird photos. (The email has been edited for publication purposes.)

I thought members of the Florida Bluebird Society would be interested in seeing who showed up in my yard on Halloween, dressed in his costume — this eye-catching adult male Baltimore Oriole with Summer Tanager Red on his chest!

I've not been able to find much information on similar cases. There was one research study done on a similar color variation in Baltimore Orioles in Canada some years back, but I cannot find anything else.

It was thought to be caused by the Orioles eating berries from an exotic plant during their first molt, before they left on their southward migration.

I sent this picture collage to Cornell University, with my first feeder watch count for the season, and am hoping that eventually, someone will reply. He is still around, with, at least five others.

One more very interesting bit of info regarding the Orioles. In September-October, Baltimore Orioles start migrating, and the ones you see in our area during



this time are just passing through, on the way to their winter grounds.

Well, today marks the 61st day in a row that I have had an Oriole present in my yard! Surely some have moved through (maybe all?) at different times, but to have them daily, for this length of time during migration, is different! I'm wondering how

many I will end up having in the dead of winter, when the others show up? I'm loving it and don't care how much money I spend on jelly, oranges and suet to keep them happy. Some of them also squeeze through the small caged feeder and snatch my bluebird's mealworms.



# 589 Bluebirds Reported Seen During FBS 2014 Fall Blitz

A big thank you to all of the folks who volunteered to count Eastern Bluebirds for the Florida Bluebird Society's Statewide 2014 Fall Blitz. This year the FBS extended the number of days to three, from two, in order to give more individuals an opportunity to participate.

From Friday, November 7, to Sunday, November 9, a total of 589 bluebirds were counted from 35 counties.

First time reporting came from Washington and Liberty counties, in the western panhandle, and Sarasota County on the Gulf coast in south Florida.

Hillsborough came in first, with a record 103 sightings from many locations around the county.

Second place goes to Citrus County with 51 sightings.

The FBS received sightings from the western-most county, Escambia, in the panhandle, all the way down to Miami-Dade, in the southeast.

A special "thank you" goes out to an FBS member from Citrus County, Marcie Clutter, who drove a whopping total of 144 miles that weekend to count

bluebirds for the blitz. She counted blues in Citrus, and Hernando counties. What dedication.




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## Unusual sighting of Bluebirds In east central Clearwater

This afternoon, Sunday, (December 14) from about 3:30PM to 3:45PM, we watched a flock of Eastern Bluebirds on the northwest corner of McMullen Booth Road and Sunset Point Road, in extreme east central Clearwater, just across the road from Safety Harbor. What is unusual to us about this sighting is the fact that we normally don't find bluebirds this far south in the county.

Five males and three females were seen on the utility wires and going down to the ground apparently feeding. This location is a building site surrounded by a chain linked fence. The birds were still present upon our departure. Adding to the birding excitement, was a sometimes hard to find Red-tailed Hawk, soaring overhead.

Reported on Brdbrain  
By Bob and Denise Lane  
Clearwater

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