During the 2010 nesting season the Florida Bluebird Society (FBS) website streamed activity from a nestbox camera located at Penney Retirement Community in Penney Farms. Paul Welch was our “technical” volunteer for that project. After the initial season, camera problems combined with computer problems and Paul’s ill health made it impossible for us to re-establish the stream in subsequent years.

Seven years have passed, and amazing changes have taken place in electronic and computer technologies. Our 2010 setup involved a camera in the nestbox with cables running to a large computer and monitor. Our 2017 setup has a cell phone size computer (programed by a middle school student), a ½” camera, and two tiny infrared lights. All installed in the nestbox. These are connected via a cable to a Wi-Fi Extender which is plugged in along with a power cord to an electrical outlet. Of course that is just the equipment. The vital component is a person with the knowledge and skill to put it all together and link it to the internet for all to view.

There were many people involved in this project, but none of this would have been possible without the technical expertise of our Web Master Ken Bell. We are very appreciative of his willingness to volunteer the countless hours he has and continues to devote to this project.

We are also thankful Fern Kinion had an active nest box in close proximity to her house, and for her willingness to have a hole cut through an exterior...
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FBS Visits Macquarie Group

Thanks to coordination done by Board Member Joanne Heinrich, FBS recently provided an educational program to a full meeting room of employees of the Macquarie Group, a member of GRR Americas Financial Management Group, at their office in Jacksonville. The program was given by Faith Jones.

The presentation commenced with information about the bond between humans and birds. Scientific research confirming the importance of birds to human welfare was outlined. General bluebird information, and why we love bluebirds was provided, including images of bird development in the nest box.

A brief history of the FBS with information on our current activities concluded the presentation.

This was a wonderful opportunity for FBS to introduce a different segment of the population to bluebirds. We are grateful to Joanne for organizing the event and to Faith for going to Jacksonville to do the presentation.

Similar presentations can often be made available on request.

NEW MEMBERS
Roger Jensen  Pinellas Park
Cables. Bruce Hall was also a key component making the electronic connections and final tests in Tampa. He, with assistance of a friend, also installed the new enlarged nestbox (constructed by Shawn and Cheri Martin Spray).

Our VP, Ken Custer, was the whip-cracker for this project, keeping us all on track and motivating us with his enthusiasm to get it completed. We also appreciate his ditch-digging skills which were used to bury cables.

Now that we have one nest camera up and running, the Board of Directors is researching the possibility of generating detailed instructions for duplication of this NestCam setup and internet connections. We are even toying with the idea of creating a kit that would provide pre-programed components and instructions so that others could have a similar setups in their nest boxes.

If you have not seen Orville and Lucy on the live stream from their nestbox the link is on our website, floridabluebirdsociety.org.

P.S. Current News

For over two weeks, Orville and Lucy put grasses in the nest box and then proceeded to remove them. While the birds were in the box they were very interested in the top of the box. They spent a lot of time looking up. As you can see in the picture below, every piece of grass was removed.

Although they pair continued to hang out in the yard and on perches near the box, Orville and Lucy stopped going in the nest box.

We became concerned that whatever was bothering the birds about the box might prevent them from nesting. We can only speculate at the problem. Did the infrared lights and camera resemble a predator? Were the lights giving off a glow of any sort? Was the nest box entrance hole too high and therefore too close to the camera? Did the Raspberry Pi computer have any vibration that upset them? It could have been one or all of these things.

It became obvious Orville and Lucy were not going to use the box. On February 26 the either net cable was disconnected from the computer in the new nest box, and the box was removed. Their old nest box was put back on the pole. We hope Orville and Lucy will decide to start a new nest in their old nest box.

In the mean time, we will be working on another proto-type. We will be making changes to the design of the box and the configuration of the equipment in the box.

Our hope is Orville and Lucy will quickly embark on their first nesting. We should be able to have the next proto-type ready to install for a second nesting.

Early Nest Completion

Are nests being completed earlier this year? What is the earliest date you have found a completed nest when doing your nestbox checks? The FBS wants to know.

For many years, Bill Pennewill has started the weekly nestbox checks on his trail in northeast Florida in early February. On the first checks he usually finds either empty boxes, or ones with a bit of nesting material.

Imagine his surprise when he opened a box on February 6, 2017 and found a completed nest! This is the earliest nest completion in his nine years of records.
If You Find a Baby Bird...

Spring is breeding and nesting season for many species. It is also the time when our local wildlife rehabilitators are busy 24/7 and appreciate volunteers. There is a great deal of information and instruction available online.

According to the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission, “When finding a baby animal it is generally best to leave it alone. Often the animal is not orphaned and the parent may be out getting food for the animal, or watching the baby from a distance. Never pick up baby animals and remove them from their natural environment!”

In most cases, baby birds you encounter will have feathers. This means they are fledglings who have left the nest, but their parents are still feeding them. They may be hopping on the ground, fluttering their wings, etc. If this is the case, the parents are likely hiding nearby waiting until it is safe to feed their offspring. As long as the bird is safe from cats, dogs and people, you should leave the area. If the bird is threatened you should put the bird in a nearby bush or tree limb then watch from a distance to determine if the parents are close. If after 20-30 minutes there is no sign of the parents call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

If the bird is injured you should contact an FWC-licensed wildlife rehabilitator for instructions. A list by county is available on their website, myfwc.com.

Bolles Bluebird Project

Students at The Bolles Schools in Jacksonville continue their interest in bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds. Following the success of the initial eight nest boxes installed last year on the Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus, additional nest boxes have been installed on the Bolles Lower School Ponte Vedra Campus.

Under the direction of Brett Moyer, Honors Environmental Science Teacher and FBS Board Member, students from The Bolles School recently installed nest boxes in Alexandra Oaks Park and River Oaks Park in San Marco. This was done in cooperation with the San Marco Preservation Society and the Bolles School Environmental Club.

Recently, some of the upper level students taught the younger students about Eastern bluebirds and Purple Martins. That information is available at this link http://www.bolles.org/cf_news/view.cfm?newsid=1513

What is going on in your nest box? If you have not already done so, it is time to start your regular checks. Remember no more than once a week. Be sure to keep a record of what you find. You can submit to Cornell’s NestWatch Program at nestwatch.org, or use one of our forms available on our web site and submit the data on a Season Summary form at the end of the nesting season.

We would love to hear from you. Please send your stories to floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com for inclusion in a future newsletter.

Wild Birds Unlimited in Jacksonville had a report from a customer of an egg laid the last week in January.

On February 11th, a partially completed nest was found in one of new nest boxes on the Bolles School Ponte Vedra campus. Their first nest on that trail.
Florida Bluebird Society, Inc. is a recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization. Donations to the Florida Bluebird Society, Inc. are considered tax deductible.

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