

The Florida Bluebird Society

Dedicated to the Protection and Conservation of Bluebirds in Florida



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Nest Box WebCam Streaming Live



View inside the nestbox. Raspberry Pi computer attached to the side panel, camera and two infrared lights attached to the roof.

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 1/2” 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



Orville & Lucy's new home being installed by Bruce Hall

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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.

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. 



Joanne Heinrich, Faith Jones, and a few of the attendees from the February 27, 2017 FBS presentation at the Macquarie Group office in Jacksonville.

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

Nestbox WebCam Streaming Live

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View inside the nestbox

wall of her house for the necessary 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-programmed 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 what ever 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



Orville & Lucy

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



from the Nest Box

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.



Ideas for Bluebird Research Needed

Is there a question about bluebirds you would like to try to answer?

The FBS has Bill Pennewill Research Grant Funds available. Information and application forms are located in the Resource section of our web site, floridabluebirdsociety.org.



FLORIDA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY'S STATEWIDE BLUEBIRD BLITZ

April 7 - 9

Visit our website
FloridaBluebirdSociety.org for
information and participation
instructions.

Florida Bluebirds Once a Separate Subspecies

When the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum bulletin #196 was printed in 1949 the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia Sialis*) was thought to have four subspecies or geographic races.

According to the bulletin, the subspecies were:

- **Eastern Bluebird** (*Sialia sialis sialis*) found east of the Rocky Mountains except southern Florida and southern Texas.
- **Florida Bluebird** (*Sialia sialis grata*) found in the southern half of Florida.
- **Tamaulipas Bluebird** (*Sialia sialis episcopus*) found in northeastern Mexico and the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas.
- **Azure Bluebirds** occur from southeastern Arizona south into Mexico.

It was also believed that there were additional races in Central America.

The Florida Bluebird (*Sialia sialis grata*) was named by Outram Bangs in 1898. He described the Florida

bluebird as being about the same size as the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis sialis*) but with a bigger and stouter bill, larger tarsus and foot, its upperparts having a clearer blue and less purple than the Eastern. He felt the blue in *Sialia sialis sialis* to be about smalt blue, and that in *Sialia sialis grata* to be about French blue.

In 1932, Arthur H. Howell wrote that the Florida bluebird (*Sialia sialis grata*) could be found "nearly throughout peninsular Florida, from about Lake County south to Royal Palm Hammock." He also wrote, "The Florida Bluebird lives chiefly in the open pine forests where there is an abundance of rotting stubs suitable for nesting sites. The birds are not at all shy, and their sweet, mellow whistles and charm to the desolate wastes that compose so much of central and southern Florida. The nests are in hollow stubs or fence posts, usually from 4 to 25 feet above the ground."

Current taxonomy divides our favorite thrushes into three species.

- **Eastern Bluebird** (*Sialia sialis*) found east of the Rockies.
- **Western Bluebird** (*Sialia Mexicana*) found at lower elevations west of the Rockies.
- **Mountain Bluebird** (*Sialia currocoides*) occur throughout the Rocky Mountains.



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