

The Florida Bluebird Society

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



Volume 8, Issue 1

2018



Newsletter Gets A New Look For The New Year

You will notice this issue of our newsletter has a slightly different look. In an effort to make it easier to read on electronic devices, we have made some changes to the format. Let us know what you think.

A Teachable Moment- Story Continued from the Fall Newsletter: “Bobby and Charlene’s Late Brood”



By *Joanne Q. Heinrich*
Vice President, Florida Bluebird Society
Northeast Florida Coordinator

As we wrapped up our previous FBS Newsletter a few months ago on August 30th, we had an exciting story unfolding of two 10-day old hatchlings from Bobby and Charlene Hickman’s late brood. I’m sorry to say that the story has a tragic ending, but one that we may all be able to learn from.

It was about a day or so after Faith sent us the newsletter that I got a text from a distraught Bobby saying that a rat snake got to the babies. Bobby caught the snake red handed, but too late to save the babies. After surveying the damage, he estimates the snake was about 4 ½-5 feet long. I didn’t realize they got so big.

Being that this is Bobby and Charlene’s 2nd or 3rd season of hosting bluebirds, I hoped that they wouldn’t give up and to my delight, they are more committed than ever to see successful broods in the future. I visited the Hickman’s to take some measurements and pictures of their set up so that this can be a teachable moment.

The length from the ground to the top of the baffle is 5’2”, with another 3 inches to the bottom of the nest box. The baffle is the size the Florida Bluebird Society promotes in the plans, 8”x 24”. They also had a wire Noel



Guard that looks rather intimidating to me, but not to the snake... One thought is that the snake was able to climb the pole and rest its body on the top of the baffle, then gained easy access to the interior.

The Hickman's realized they needed to make a change. They have attached a sheet metal cone over the baffle and will probably take off the Noel Guard. This is the set up on one of my poles where I don't have the large raccoon baffle (12"X23") and has seemed to work so far. (This has concerned me so that I may put a sheet metal cone over my raccoon baffle too! The heck with how it looks, these are my bluebirds we're talking about!)

On another note, with all that going on, Bobby also found time to help me with a small design change to the FBS approved nest box plans. I find that taking a quick picture of the nest during monitoring is the best way for me to properly document the activity. And with today's slick phone designs, it's a lot easier than a camera. But opening the door to get natural light

in is awkward. (Please do not use flash on the eggs or nestlings. There is still some debate on this issue, but why take a chance of causing harm the developing vision of the babies).

I had Bobby build a nest box that opens from the top, without letting water in. (I can't take credit for the idea as Bobby had already altered his box to open from the top and I got jealous!). We just needed a latch on the side and voila—the "Bobby Top" enhancement was born. After making one for me, he volunteered to make more. We are now able to offer them as a premium for minimum donation of \$25.00. If anyone is interested in a new nest box, please contact me and leave a message at 904-400-1459.



**BLUEBIRD
NESTBOXES
AVAILABLE**

**\$25.00
MINIMUM
DONATION**

Details in
above article





Message From Our President

Ken Custer



Your current board has been working diligently behind the scenes trying to generate new and exciting projects that will (hopefully) encourage more membership participation. One of our newest projects is for us to create our very own Florida Bluebird Society (FBS) Calendar for 2019. It seems as though this time of the year gets us thinking of planning for the New Year. We agree that our calendar should be more of a "Membership/Educational/PR" project than a fundraiser (although, if it ends up generating some additional funds to sponsor more grants, then that's an added plus). Our calendar will include things like key dates that are specific to FBS and photos from our

own members. Please send any/all of your best photos to one of our board members and the top 12 finalists will be included in our 2019 calendar. We are hoping that this might be an ongoing yearly project for FBS.

We have updated our FBS Regional/County Map showing where our current members live. Hopefully, this map will help us visually identify where our members are geographically located and aide in setting up Regional/County "Get-togethers". For instance, most of our current members reside in Regions 3 and 4. Region 4 is already busy making plans for an early Spring (2018) "Get-together" in North Tampa which will include our special guests of honor, Orville and Lucy! Yes, that's right. You will be able to visit "Fern's Garden" and enjoy watching Orville and Lucy and their family in action. For those of you who do not know, this is the site of our FBS prototype webcam and we're hoping to add an external camera (thanks to our own Ken Bell) in time for the get-together. More information on this particular event will be forthcoming later. Hope to see you there!



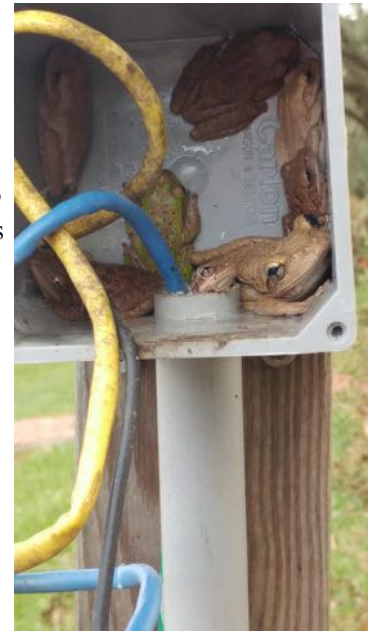
News from Orville & Lucy's Nestbox

By October it was evident nesting season was over, and it was time for Fern to clean out Orville & Lucy's nestbox. Imagine the surprise when the box was opened and there was a large Cuban treefrog, *Osteopilus septentrionalis*! This nestbox is fitted with a camera for our live streaming. There is an additional box on the same post to protect the necessary cables. As you can see in the attached picture, Cuban treefrogs had also moved into that box and already had offspring.

According to information provided by the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Services, Cuban treefrogs prefer enclosed spaces and often enter nestboxes intended for birds. It was still a very unwelcomed surprise.

Cuban treefrogs are an **invasive exotic** species in Florida. They are considered exotic because they are not native to Florida. They are considered invasive because they harm our native ecosystems. They are not only displacing our native treefrogs and anoles, they actually eat them.

Additional information, including how to identify Cuban treefrogs, can be found at this link <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FILES/UW/UW25900.pdf>. At this time, it is unknown how the presence of Cuban treefrogs affects birds use of a nestbox. The nestbox has been cleaned and the Cuban treefrogs have been euthanized. We can all monitor the live stream from the nestbox to see if Lucy is deterred from using the box again this Spring.



News from Citrus County

Lou and Sue Kociuk are "snowbirds" who winter in Citrus County and summer in Norfolk County, Ontario. This winter, they are updating some of the bluebird nestboxes in their Florida neighborhood. They had their friend Peter Thiessen build some nestboxes according to the Florida Bluebird Society and North American Bluebird Society approved nestbox plans. http://floridabluebirdsociety.org/bluebird_nestbox/

They also reported two successful clutches this summer at their tree farm in Canada.

Time to Clean and Repair Nestboxes

Nesting season has ended and now is the time to prepare for next season. We suggest you not only clean out your boxes, but take a good look at them. If you see anything about your box or predator guards that might pose a hazard to birds now is the time to make repairs.



Please leave your nestboxes in place as birds often will take shelter in them during cold weather.



In the Works for 2018

Here are some of the projects we have underway. Please contact us at FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com if you are interested in assisting with any of these projects.

- **Live Stream Nestbox Activity**

Thanks to the efforts of many, including Ken Bell, Fern Kinion, and Bruce Hall, we successfully streamed the activity in a bluebird nestbox in Tampa on the internet via YouTube. A few repairs had to be made on the equipment, but it is in place and ready to record again. The link to the live stream is on our website as is a link to a short video that condenses the activity from last season.

- **Additional Live Streams of Nesting Activity**

For the upcoming nesting season we will be adding a second nest camera in a nestbox on the campus of the Bolles School in Jacksonville. In addition to the camera in the nestbox, Ken Bell has created an external camera that will be mounted close to the nestbox and will record the activity outside of the nestbox. Both the activity inside and outside will be live streamed. If you have the capability of viewing both live streams on a split screen, you will have the opportunity to simultaneously view the goings-on inside and outside of the nestbox!

The trenches have been dug, and the conduit for the power-over-ethernet (POE) cable was laid for this project in early December. In mid-January, the POE cable will be run through the conduit, the cameras will be installed, and the internet connections for both cameras established. You will be notified via an e-mail when this has been accomplished.

- **“How To” Videos**

In response to a number of requests from people who would like more details about information found on our website, we plan to create a number of instructional videos. The topics we are currently working on include:

- ◊ Building the Right Nestbox

Starting with the FBS nestbox plans, this video will detail the supplies needed, and include step by step tutorial on putting the nestbox together.

- ◊ Locating Your Nestbox

- ◊ Ways to Protect Your Nestbox from Predators

- ◊ Nestbox Monitoring

- ◊ How to Plan a Bluebird Trail

- **2019 FBS Calendar**

As mentioned in the Message from Our President, we would like to create a calendar with your bluebird photos. If you have any digital images you are willing to submit for consideration, please send them to FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com. Photo credit will be given to all photographers.



Bluebird Research Grants Available

Is there a question about bluebirds or other native cavity-nesting birds you would like to try to answer?

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

Share Your Bluebird Story

Have you had an interesting interaction with bluebirds that you are willing to share? If so, we would like to hear about it. Please send your story with any related photos to floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com.



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