

The Florida Bluebird Society

Dedicated to the Protection
and Conservation of Bluebirds in Florida



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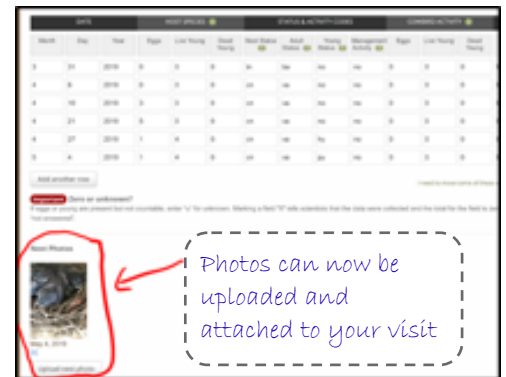
NestWatch Now Features Photo Uploads

In our last newsletter we told you about the new NestWatch mobile app for recording your nestbox monitoring visits. Be sure to keep your copy updates as the Cornell Lab of Ornithology continues to make improvements and add new features to NestWatch.

Did you know NestWatch had a Bulk Upload tool for entering your old data? Or, that there are data entry tutorial videos to show you step-by-step how to enter your nestbox monitoring data?

In May, there was a major advancement to the mobile app and website. The ability to upload photos was added. By submitting photos you agree to their Terms and Conditions. Be sure to read them.

With this new feature bluebirders are now able to attach up to three images that will be linked to a specific visit and nest. This tool will not only enhance your records, it will allow researchers to cross check the data entered by us citizen scientists with what is actually being seen in the nest.



We strongly encourage you to use this new NestWatch feature. Special precautions should be taken when photographing active nests. They include:

- Each nest visit should be limited to less than **one minute** of disturbance
- Plan your visit. Have everything ready before you open the nestbox.
- Practice holding your phone and taking pictures as you will in your nestbox.
- Turn off the flash when photographing nestlings.
- Slide your smartphone camera into the top of the box, click a few photos, close the box and walk away.
- Once you are quick enough, after snapping a few photos you should have time to check to confirm the photo is usable before closing the box in under 1 minute.
- Do not open the box after nestlings are 12-13 days old to prevent premature fledging.
- Even though you are tired, enter your data online the same day as your visit. It is much easier to do it one visit at a time. Waiting until the end of the season to enter data and pictures can be overwhelming.

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Photos Needed for 2020 Calendar

CALLING ALL BLUEBIRD PHOTOGRAPHERS!!!

Florida Bluebird Society is having our second annual photo contest for the 2020 Florida Bluebird Society calendar. The calendar will be given as a gift to all members who join/renew during our August membership drive (while supplies last). Winners will also receive a calendar featuring the winning photographs! **Deadline for submission is June 15.**

Please submit up to 3 of your best bluebird photographs via "Send Message" button on our Facebook page or email to rhonda.ockay1@floridabluebirdsociety.org.

Good luck !

Cuban Treefrogs Compete with Native Birds for Nestboxes

Faith Jones

The Cuban treefrog, *Osteopilus septentrionalis*, is native to parts of the West Indies. In Florida, the Cuban treefrog is an invasive exotic (non-native) species. Cuban treefrogs eat our native frogs and other wildlife. They harm our native ecosystems, and cause problems for humans.

The first confirmed record of a Cuban treefrog in Florida was in the 1920s in the Keys. As is true with many of our invasive exotic species, they likely arrived unintentionally by ship. While individuals have been documented throughout the Southeast from South Carolina to Texas, the current established breeding populations are only in Florida. They extend from the Keys to Cedar Key on the Gulf Coast and Jacksonville on the Atlantic Coast. They do not tolerate freezing weather.

Problems

"They like cool, dark, places during the day to rest and that can be in an open pipe or a utility box, which has enough room to allow the animal to crawl inside. Obviously if it gets into the wiring, it can short it out and cause damage," said Fort Myers ecosystem ecologist Kevin Erwin.

Cuban treefrogs are primarily nocturnal, and thrive in human-modified areas. A few of the problems they cause include:

- clogged drains
- egg masses in pools and decorative ponds
- burning and irritation of eyes and nose from contact. You should not touch the animals with your bare hands. Keep your pets away from them, too.
- may short-circuit your electrical box, causing a power outage.
- occupy nestboxes intended for native birds.

Description

Cuban treefrogs are the largest species of treefrog in Florida. Most range in length from 1-4 inches long, but an adult female may exceed 6 inches. They have very large eyes, giving them a "bug-eyed" appearance. They usually have rough or warty skin, and sometimes have a pattern of large wavy markings or blotches on their back, and frequently have stripes or bands on the dorsal surface of their legs.



Cuban treefrogs use nestboxes installed to benefit native wildlife. This one was installed for chickadees.
Photo Kat Waters

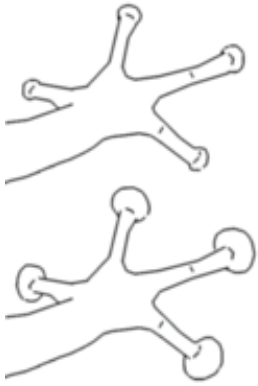


Adult Cuban treefrog.
Photo Steve A. Johnson, UF/IFAS

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Cuban Treefrogs

Continued from page 2



Drawing by Monica E. McGarrity UF/IFAS

Cuban treefrogs found around your home are typically light creamy brown, but their color may vary from creamy white to green, gray, beige, yellow, dark brown, or a combination of these colors. They have a yellowish wash where their front and rear legs are attached to their body.

All treefrogs have toepads, but those of the Cuban treefrog are much larger than our native treefrogs.

Cuban treefrogs can be difficult to distinguish from our eight native treefrog species, get help identifying treefrogs from <http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu> or your local University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (UF/IFAS) Extension office.

What You Can Do

It is important to document the locations of Cuban treefrogs in Florida, **especially in the panhandle**. If you see a Cuban treefrog, or suspect you have seen one, outside of peninsular Florida please email Dr. Steve A. Johnson at tadpole@ufl.edu. Include your name, date you saw the frog, where you saw it (county, city, street address), and also attach a digital image so Dr. Johnson can positively identify the frog. You can help manage this invasive species in and around your yard. Because Cuban treefrogs eat native frogs and other wildlife, reducing their negative impacts helps sustain Florida's natural environment. UF/IFAS recommends you capture and humanely euthanize Cuban treefrogs. You can also reduce Cuban treefrog impacts by eliminating their eggs and potential breeding sites.

Be positive about the frog's identification before euthanizing what you believe to be a Cuban treefrog.

You can capture Cuban treefrogs by simply grabbing them from their perch sites. Cuban treefrogs secrete an irritating substance, so be sure to wear rubber gloves or use a plastic bag as a glove. Approach the frog and grasp it firmly in a continuous, swift movement.

You can also attract the frogs to hiding places where they can be easily captured and removed. Instructions are at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw308>.

The easiest way to humanely euthanize a Cuban treefrog is to place the bagged frog into a refrigerator for 3–4 hours then transfer it to a freezer for an additional 24 hours. The initial cool-down period in the fridge acts as an anesthetic to numb the frog so it does not feel any pain when it freezes. It should then be disposed of in your household garbage.

Please do our part to control this invasive exotic species that competes for nestboxes.

Sources and Additional Information

Carmichael, P. and W. Williams. 2004. Florida's Fabulous Reptiles and Amphibians. Tampa, FL: World Publications. 120 pp. ISBN: 0-911977-11-2. This is an excellent coffee-table book with wonderful pictures and good information.

Johnson, S.A., The Cuban Treefrog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*) in Florida (WEC218), Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (rev. 01/2017). Explains the species and their impacts. 7pp

Powell, R., R. Conant and J.T. Collins, 2016. Peterson Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. 494 pp. ISBN: 978-0-544-12997-9. This is the standard field guide for many herpetologists and covers hundreds of species of amphibians and reptiles

UF/IFAS Extension Florida Wildlife website <http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/>. Click the link to "Wildlife Information," and then find the link to the "Frogs & Toads of Florida" page. In addition to information on Florida's frogs, there are also links to many other useful, wildlife-related resources at the site.

UF/IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation website <http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/>. Click the links for "Florida's Frogs," "Invasive Cuban Treefrog," and "Become a Citizen Scientist." This website contains images and identification tips for all of Florida's frogs as well as access to recordings of the calls of the species, including the Cuban treefrog



What Do You Call More Than One Titmouse?

Faith Jones



In our culture, it seems when enough people use or pronounce a word incorrectly it becomes accepted. Tufted Titmouse apparently is one of those words. If there are more than one *Baeolophus bicolor* at your bird feeder do you have titmice or titmouses?

I have always answered that question with titmouses.

When I realized well-known birders such as David Allen Sibley and Richard Crossley were calling them titmice I decided to do some research to determine if I was incorrect.

Etymologist Diana Wells has studied and written books on the derivation of flower and bird names. According to Wells, the common name “titmouse” is from the Old Icelandic *titr* meaning small, and the Anglo-Saxon *mase* meaning small bird.

This is not the same root as “mouse” the rodent which derives from the Latin *mus*. Using titmice as a plural for titmouse is not etymologically consistent. It would be like using hices as the plural for house.

References

O'Connor, Mike. *Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches? And Other Bird Questions You Know You Want to Ask*. 1992 Beacon Press. Boston
Wells, Diana. *100 Birds and How Their Got Their Names*. 2002. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, NC



Tufted Titmouses (*Baeolophus bicolor*)
Ken Schmidt

Florida's Other BLUE Bird

Faith Jones



Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) Faith Jones

We all know the Eastern Bluebird, *Sialis sialis*, but how much do you know about this other blue bird, the Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)?

Endemic to Florida, the Florida scrub-jay is only found in Florida. They are one of the most habitat-restricted birds. Although they may live up to 15 years, most never travel more than a mile from their birthplace.

Similar in shape, the Florida scrub-jay is about one inch larger than a Northern Mockingbird. The Florida scrub-jay is a beautiful blue and gray bird. Males and females look alike

They are particular about where they live. Florida scrub-jays inhabit only oak scrub, a disappearing Florida habitat. They like it to be 60% trees and shrubs that are one to two meters in height with at least 20% open sandy ground. To maintain optimal habitat for jays, historically fire-maintained scrub needs to be burned every 10-15 years.

The Florida scrub-jays live in cooperative family groups consisting of two breeders and up to six helpers defending a five to 25 acres territory. The helpers are offspring from previous years. The pair bond of the two breeders is strong, they are considered to be permanently monogamous. There are only three records of inbreeding.



Faith Jones

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Florida's Other BLUE Bird (continued from page 4)

Diet: Most of the year they eat grasshoppers, crickets and caterpillars. They will also eat spiders, lizards, small snakes, eggs, and berries. During the fall and winter their diet consists mainly of acorns. A Florida scrub-jay will bury between 6500 and 8000 acorns each year. They recover and consume about 75% of these acorns.

Nesting: Unlike bluebirds, Florida scrub-jays are not cavity nesters. They construct an eight inch nest with a three inch cup of oak twigs with scrub palmetto fibers. Nests are located near the edge of a low dense shrub, under vines or clumps of leaves. They generally have one clutch per year of two to five eggs laid in March or April. The eggs are incubated for eighteen days.



Florida scrub-jay pair (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)

Faith Jones

Nestlings are fed only animal protein. Males, females, and helpers all feed the nestlings. The average nest of four nestlings requires 14 feedings per hour during most of the daylight hours. Nestlings fledge in 18 days, and young birds become independent at about 85 days.

If the first nest fails, the pair will rebuild in a different location and egg-laying will start about 10 days after the nest failure.

Status: The Florida scrub-jay is listed as Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The primary threats are habitat destruction, fragmentation and degradation from development and agriculture.

References

Alderfer, J. (ed.) *National Geographic Complete Birds of North America*. Washington DC. National Geographic Society. 2014

Ehrlich, Paul R., Dobkin, David S., Wheye, Darryl. *The Birder's Handbook*. New York, Simon & Schuster.

JayWatch Volunteer Training Manual. Audubon Florida 2015



Bluebird Presentation

The FBS continue to educate the public about bluebirds. There was standing room only at our bluebird presentation held at the St. Johns Wild Birds Unlimited store. Our thanks to Joanne Heinrich, FBS VP, for providing this presentation.





WELCOME

NEW MEMBERS

Judy Adams
Danellen Dotts
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Mayo
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St Augustine

Sharing a Love of Bluebirds

Dr. Brett Moyer continues to share his love of bluebirds with students at The Bolles School in Jacksonville. This year several of his students did a project to raise awareness of bluebirds on their school campuses. Their project culminated in a performance they gave to lower school students.

Pictured to the right are the two girls who dressed up as bluebirds. They were in a nest when the boy, playing the role of the evil European Starling, came to bully them out of their nest.

Their presentation also included a video Moyers created and showed at the 2018 FBS Annual Meeting which highlights the bluebird activity at the school during the 2018 nesting season. The performance was very well received by the younger students.

We are appreciative of all Dr. Moyer's efforts to expose students to the joy of bluebirding.



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