

The Florida Bluebird Society

Dedicated to the Protection
and Conservation of Bluebirds in Florida



Volume 9, Issue 5

2019



FBS Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Annual Meeting

The organizational meeting of the Florida Bluebird Society (FBS) was held in August 2009. This year's Annual Meeting marked our 10th anniversary. Members from around the state attended this year's meeting held on August 24 at the Penney Retirement Community in Penney Farms. A prize was given to the person who traveled the farthest to attend. Members from Seminole, Citrus, Hernando, Pinellas, and Indian River Counties all traveled 100- 195 miles. The winner was Pam Overmyer, who traveled from Bay County, over 200 miles.



Six-year-old Keira Ockay was awarded a prize as the youngest member in attendance. These awards were followed by a few "ice breaker" bluebird-related questions.



The bulk of the meeting was spent talking about FBS involvement in a number of projects, and with questions and answers. Joanne Heinrich reminded everyone that FBS has **Speakers** available who can provide a program on bluebirds to interested groups. Our presentation includes the history of bluebirds and key things people should know before erecting a nestbox. This includes good locations, important features of nestboxes and predator guards, tips on installation, good locations, and proper monitoring. If you know of a group interested in a bluebird presentation please contact us at fbs.inquiries1@floridabluebirdsociety.org

Faith Jones discussed our **Grant Program**. FBS awarded a grant to a University of Florida graduate student who conducted research on the effects of construction activity on Eastern Bluebird nesting. There are currently funds available. Details and FBS Grant Application are available on our website.

Jim Nichols gave a summary of the Flagler Palm Coast High School student **"Florida Bluebird Project"** that he mentored. Their multi-faceted project involved research, educating the community, finding nine suitable nestbox locations, obtaining permission to install the boxes, finding responsible long-term nestbox monitors, securing materials, then constructing nestboxes and predator guards, and installing the nestboxes. The nestboxes were installed at a number of elementary schools, a park and a garden center. The high school students gave a presentation at each of the elementary schools where a nestbox was installed.

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Annual Meeting *Continued from page 2*

The Florida Bluebird Project won the regional President's Environmental Youth Award. Jim introduced Diane Tomko, the instructor for this project, who was in attendance. Congratulations are extended to these Flagler Palm Coast High School students.

Brett Moyer reported that bluebird-related activities continue at **The Bolles School**. This season there were active nestboxes on all three campuses. The number of Eastern Bluebirds fledged from Bolles School nestboxes has increased every year. Various aspects of bluebirds and bluebirding are worked into the curriculum for a number of courses. Upper grade students have done presentations for lower grade students.

Rhonda Ockay and Ken Custer have worked diligently on the **FBS 2020 Calendar**. The calendar is currently at the printer and will be available soon.

An **Election** for Board of Directors was held. According to FBS By-Laws, Board Members are elected for 3-year terms. The terms are staggered with two or three members elected each August. Pam Overmyer was elected and Cheri Martin-Spray was re-elected to the Board. We thank Dr. Brett Moyer for his service to FBS as a Board Member, and we look forward to continuing to work with him on a less formal basis.

At the Board meeting that followed the Annual Meeting, the Board determined the officers for the new season will be:

President: Joanne Heinrich
Vice Pres.: Jim Nichols
Secretary: Rhonda Ockay
Treasurer: Faith Jones

Thanks to Jan Nichols for her donation of beautifully painted bluebird items that we used for door prizes. Congratulations to Billi Wagner and Brett Moyer who won the door prizes.

The meeting was followed by a light lunch and a celebratory 10th Anniversary cake.



Florida Bluebird Society: the 1st Ten Years

Bill Pennewill

Ten years ago, on August 9, 2009, 19 people sat down in a conference room of the Wildlife Ecology Department at the University of Florida. That meeting was the culmination of a lot of effort and a lot of help by a lot of people. It was the initial meeting of the Florida Bluebird Society. Three of the original 19 were present for the 10th anniversary meeting. They were Nell Pennewill, Faith Jones, and Bill Pennewill who gave the presentation on our history.

But, let's start at the beginning. Shortly after moving to the Penney Retirement Community (PRC) in 2004 Bill became very involved in assisting with the 60 bluebird nestboxes scattered around the campus. The more he tried to learn about bluebirds in Florida the more he learned there was little information available. The information he found was not accurate in Florida. That led to the obvious conclusion that we needed a Florida Bluebird Society.

Bill credits the existence of the Florida Bluebird Society to Faith Jones. He and his wife Nell attended a birding trip with Faith and her husband Jimmy in the Panhandle. During that weekend outing he convinced Faith that we needed to create a Florida Bluebird Society. We each chipped in \$100 to get it started. At that point we had more hope than money to work with.

Starting the Florida Bluebird Society wasn't always easy. We made mistakes. But through it all we had a lot of people who shared our vision and were willing to help us achieve that goal. That included 21 individuals, couples, and organizations that, as Charter members of the Florida Bluebird Society, were willing to help underwrite the cost of creating the organization. Bill mentioned a few of those folks at the meeting.

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1st 10 Years *Continued from Page 02*

Phil and Jackie Berry were two. Phil was on the board of the North American Bluebird Society. He was one of the original Florida Bluebird Society board members and provided names of people who might be interested in starting a Florida Bluebird Society.

Dr. Kathryn Sieving, professor of wildlife ecology and conservation at the University in Florida, who was involved in bluebird research, was another.

Dick Yaeger, who in December 2008 helped register the domain name for Florida Bluebird Society, created our initial website.

Bet Zimmerman, now Bet Smith, maintains the most informative bluebird website, www.sialis.org. Bet personally answered all my bluebird questions.

Now for a little history, giving credit where credit is due. In October 2008, Bill contacted the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) seeking advice on creating a State society. NABS was extremely helpful and suggested several avenues we could pursue including becoming part of NABS, or a part of the Florida Audubon Society. We eventually decided that the Florida Bluebird Society should be created as an independent organization.

Barbara Passmore in December 2008 allowed us to post a notice on FLORIDABIRDS which she administered. That was the first public announcement that we were attempting to create the Florida Bluebird Society.

In January 2009, we began a year-long process of Incorporating and then working with the Internal Revenue Service to have the FBS recognized as a 501c(3) not-for-profit organization. In order to solicit funds in Florida we had to register and be accepted by the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Once all the legal issues were resolved, Bill and Nell began promoting a Florida Bluebird Society throughout the state. We did everything from garden clubs, nature festivals, to events sponsored by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Eventually there came a time when Bill and Nell decided they couldn't do it anymore. In 2014, Cheri Martin-Spray took over as president. She was followed by Ken Custer who now is stepping down as president. He will be followed by Joanne Heinrich. But the one constant through all this has been Faith Jones. She was instrumental in creation of the Florida Bluebird Society, and her steadfast devotion has been the glue which has held it all together these past 10 years.

FBS Updates Principles and Nestbox Monitoring Protocol

The Florida Bluebird Society Principles remain unchanged. Our Nestbox Monitoring Protocol was based on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) guidelines. At that time, FWC advocated strict adherence to the Migratory



Bird Treaty Act which affords protection for all migrating birds, including bluebirds. The Act prohibits disturbance of bird nests during nesting season. Over the years we have gotten plenty of questions about nestboxes and monitoring from audiences. We decided we needed put in writing what we would say as answers to those questions. We also saw different techniques from members which gave more clarity to all of us. We realized guidelines have changed over the past 10 years, and we want to stay in line with both North American Bluebird Society (NABS) and FWC.

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Updated Monitoring Protocol *Continued from Page 03*

A copy of the updated document is attached to the e-mail with this newsletter and is available on our website. This is a summary of some of the changes. Our number one priority remains to **ensure the safety and well-being of the birds**. Everything the monitor needs to know can be obtained very quickly, preferably in one minute or less. When taking photographs, there is no reason to keep the nestbox open for a prolonged period of time. Do not use a flash.

We continue to recommend weekly monitoring during nesting season. Regular monitoring is for recording bluebird activity, and it also helps identify and address potential problems. Problems that you might need to resolve would be the presence of invasive exotic species such as of House Sparrows, Cuban Treefrogs, or Fire ants.

Although it is not necessary, a nest may be removed during nesting season after chicks have fledged or after a nest failure, including any nest inactive for at **least one month**. Extreme caution must be observed to ensure that the nest truly is inactive.

We also decided to include guidelines to help avoid some of the pitfalls of bluebirding. They include:

- Do not put up more boxes than you are willing to monitor on a regular basis.

- Do not put boxes up without effective predator guards.

- If parts of your trail become too burdensome to you for monitoring and managing, we suggest you try and get nearby homeowner to take over. If that is not possible you should take down the boxes.

Data recording is a key component and primary reason for nestbox monitoring. FBS requests you submit

your data to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch at: <https://nestwatch.org> You will help scientists collect valuable data on the successes and failures of nesting birds. Cornell recently created an app for your phone that allows you can take a photo (NO flash please!) and upload it immediately to your nesting attempt, then record the site all within a couple of minutes.



Nestlings at Day 12 from hatching

Lastly, DO NOT OPEN a nestbox after Day 12, or this stage of development.

We appreciate all the research and work done by Joanne Heinrich and her committee on the revision of this document. As a member of the Florida Bluebird Society, we hope you will read and abide by our Principles and Nestbox Monitoring Protocol.

FBS Logo Gets Makeover

Ten years ago, one of our Charter members, Ce Worley, created our original logo. The logo has served us well over the first ten years, but it was time for a few modifications. Ken Custer donated an original painting of a male Eastern Bluebird for use as the basis of our new logo. The painting and new logo were unveiled during the Annual Meeting.





2019 Happenings on the PRC Trail

Bill Pennervill

With 250 birds fledging from 27 nest boxes, 2019 was the second best year on record for the Penney Retirement Community's bluebird trail. That is only four fewer than the record 254 reported fledging from 33 nest boxes in 2012.

The just-concluded season also had its share of the unexpected. One brown bat tried to call two nest boxes home. When evicted from one nest box the bat simply took up residence in another nest box. When evicted from the second box, the bat returned to the first box. This went on for over a month, until the bat finally got the message and moved on.

Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Active boxes	30	30	29	29	28	31	33	33	31	27	26
Boxes from which birds fledged	27	28	28	27	27	30	33	33	31	27	26
Number of fledglings	250 ⁷	233 ⁶	179	209 ⁵	209	202 ¹	214	254 ²	227 ³	194	177 ⁴
Numbers 1-5, 7 includes Chickadees; Number 6 includes 1 Cowbird											

There also were two clutches of **6 eggs** each. In both cases all six eggs hatched and the birds fledged.

This season there were seven clutches of **unhatched eggs**. One occurred in April, another – a chickadee nest – in May, and the other five in July-August. This was the second highest number of unhatched clutches since I started keeping records. In 2017, there were eight unhatched clutches, all in July-August.

Bluebirds this season seemed to be **unusually aggressive**. While in the past a few birds were aggressive, this season more birds were more aggressive. It was not unusual for both the male and female to take turns “dive-bombing” me when opening a nest box, frequently hitting my hat. Dive-bombing birds actually scratched the scalp of one hatless resident while he was putting meal worms in a container on the roof of the nest box in his yard area.



Perhaps the most peculiar event was the discovery of two unusual nest mates in one box. In June four eggs were laid in the nest. During the July 1 nest check there was one nestling approximately 6 to 7 days old and a second nestling which had just hatched. The following week the first hatchling was 13 to 14 days old and the second nestling could not be seen. A week later the older nestling had fledged and the younger nestling was missing and there were two unhatched eggs in the nest.

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PRC Trail *Continued from page 5*

Another interesting occurrence was our porta potty nestbox. It was an open field when this bluebird nestbox was put up some years ago. Although houses now are being built there and a porta potty placed only yards from the nestbox, the bluebirds didn't seem to mind, with 10 chicks fledging from two nestings.

However, in August there was an unhatched clutch of 4 eggs, one of seven unhatched clutches reported this season on the Penney Retirement Community's bluebird trail.



WELCOME Our New Board Member



Pam is pictured here with a very charismatic Florida Scrub-Jay while volunteering with Audubon JayWatch

We are pleased to welcome Pam Overmyer, MD as the newest FBS Board Member, elected at the annual meeting in August. Pam is a retired Internal Medicine physician living in Panama City, FL but is originally from Texarkana, Texas. She graduated from Texas A&M University with a BS in Microbiology and an MD from the Texas A&M College of Medicine. After serving 9 years in the US Air Force and then 13 years in private solo practice, she decided to sell her practice and retire to pursue other interests, including getting more active in leadership of birding organizations.

Pam is currently one of the Co-Presidents of Bay County Audubon in the panhandle. She is also the owner of 2 Bluebird Trails in Bay County and monitors the boxes and reports to Nestwatch.org. Pam became interested in bluebirds over 10 years ago when the first bluebird pair used one of her yard boxes. She "adopted" an abandoned trail of boxes 5 years ago and added more boxes and had 34 total prior to the damage caused by Hurricane Michael in Oct 2018. Several boxes were lost in the storm and the trail now has 23 boxes, in addition to her three yard boxes. Despite the storm, this season was very busy when the first eggs were laid in January with the first hatchlings February 17! This nesting season produced 199 fledglings.

Pam is an avid birder and has traveled to Costa Rica and Panama to enjoy the numerous tropical birds. Although she loves all birds, there is a special place in her heart for bluebirds.

Her frequent comment is, "Bluebirds make me happy." And she hopes that everyone can have the joy of seeing and hearing our little blue friends.



FBS Nestbox Builder Jim Peters

We extend our gratitude to Jim Peters of Sanford for volunteering so many hours of his time to construct nestboxes for us. If you have seen one of Jim's boxes, you know he is a very skilled craftsman.

If you have one of the cedar nestboxes Jim has constructed, using the FBS pattern, we would love to see a picture. Pictures can be sent to FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com.



CUSTER'S LAST STAND _ as FBS President...

Saturday August 24, 2019 conducting the Annual Meeting was my "LAST" official role as FBS President. The great thing about being part of this board is that every member is passionate about providing our beautiful Eastern Bluebirds the very best for surviving in our current Florida environment. We support each other's ideas/suggestions and applaud our accomplishments ...

Back when I began my term as president, we discussed ways and/or means to help promote FBS to people outside our own membership. We mentioned one of the primary objectives was to reach more young students and help find ways to get them involved with FBS.

At our 1st annual Region 4 "get-together" (2016) in Land O Lakes (Pasco CO), we proposed the idea of having our own webcam to be tied into our website so that we could offer live streaming video during the nesting season. One of our oldest FBS members, Fern Kinion, volunteered to host the webcam in the beautiful lakeshore backyard of her Carrollwood garden home. With the help of Faith Jones, Ken Bell (our webmaster and creator of our camera), as well as Fern's daughter (Sharon Hall) and son-in-law, Bruce Hall, we were able to design and erect a new nestbox with a built-in camera. Ken and Bruce were able to link it to a computer and then to our FBS website. Orville and Lucy (the bluebird couple) became instant stars. This project helped to provide instant access to anyone who was able to view our website and helped to inspire the folks at Bolles School (Jacksonville) to write a grant proposal to do a similar project at their school. I extend a special thanks to our outgoing board member, Brett Moyer, for all of his great work introducing FBS and bluebirds to the Bolles School community. It's been an amazing journey to watch this idea accomplish what we set out for it to do.

Another new idea was to create a 2019 FBS Calendar. As with any new endeavor, we agreed to take the risk and looking back, we're all so proud of our first calendar. The calendar came together thanks to the dedication and contributions of Rhonda Ockay (our liaison with the photographers) and Bill Pennewill (founding president and provider of monthly "to do's"). It was such a huge success that we ran out of calendars even before the beginning of 2019. We have now completed our 2nd (2020) calendar and it should be available for distribution the Fall. Thanks to Jim Nichols for volunteering to help with the design and publishing. All members will receive a notice as soon as they are available and soon after that, we will provide a special "FBS 2020 Calendar" link on our website so that anyone can obtain their own copy with a minimum \$10 donation to FBS. Again, this is a great opportunity to help promote FBS to others, especially our friends/families/schools/churches.

We have just celebrated our 10th Year Anniversary (09 Aug 2009 - 09 Aug 2019) as an official society. A special thank-you to Cheri Martin-Spray for volunteering to have a special cake baked and served at our annual meeting. As an architect/artist, I proposed a new updated FBS logo to help celebrate our 10-year anniversary. We plan to have a photo (.jpg) available to download from our website. Please help promote FBS by using the new logo!

The board has been working and recently approved updates to our FBS Principles and Nestbox Monitoring Protocols. The new version will be published as part of the new 2020 calendar. We are also encouraging everyone to use Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch special website link by signing up at www.NestWatch.com and creating an account for reporting their own bluebird activities and/or information ... A huge thanks to Joanne Heinrich (and also our new president-elect) for taking the lead role on this project.

We also have set up a "G-Suite Nonprofit", a product Google provides free of charge to qualifying nonprofit organizations. It should allow the board easier collaboration, exchange of large files, and create a more organized archive. Also, it will help to eventually upload an "approved" FBS PowerPoint presentation that can be easily downloaded and used by our FBS Speaker's Forum. We have been very active in making presentations to various groups throughout Florida and it is our goal to recruit more volunteers to be certified as part of our FBS Speaker's Forum.

LAST, but certainly not LEAST ... I would like to especially thank Faith Jones for always being there 24/7. As Bill Pennewill mentioned several times during his beautiful presentation re: "Our First Ten Years", none of it would have been possible without the dedication of Faith Jones.

I'm not planning to go anywhere. I still plan to remain as a board member and will continue to help make the next 10 years even better.

Respectfully,

Ken Custer, Immediate Past President
Pasco CO Coordinator, Florida Bluebird Society



The Florida Bluebird Society thanks the following individuals and organizations for their generous financial support.

Life Members

Madison E. Alderson - Williston
Joanne Heinrich - Jacksonville
Louis Nipper - Hernando (dec.2017)
Pam Overmyer - Panama City
Richard Yeager—Penney Farms

2018-2019

Sponsors

Ann Harwood Nuss—Jacksonville
Shannon Joyce - Clermont

Patrons

Nancy Stokes - Fleming Island

Organizations

Native Nurseries of Tallahassee, Inc.



NEW MEMBERS

Les Armstrong	Jacksonville
Johnna Bellen	Jacksonville
Jim Corrigan	Sun City
Diana Daniels	Vero Beach
Herb & Paula Elliott	Hudson
Marilyn Flottman	Virginia Beach
Christine Hall	Inwood WV
Les Quick	Ponte Vedre
Marie Louise Roy	Oldsmar
Cynthia Seiler	Morgantown WV
Diane Tomko	Palm Coast
Sam Toscano	Spring TX
Kimberly Van Damme	Destin
Billi Wagner	Vero Beach



August is FBS Renewal Month

Each year, all FBS annual memberships expire in August. Renewing can be done on our website <https://floridabluebirdsociety.org/membership/>

Or

A check can be mailed to the address listed.

Select your desired Membership type:

- _____ \$15.00 Membership (single)
- _____ \$25.00 Family Membership
- _____ \$50.00 Patron/ Organization
- _____ \$100.00 Sponsor
- _____ \$500.00 Life Membership
- _____ \$10.00 Senior (62 and older)
- _____ \$10.00 Student

Mail your check made out to **Florida Bluebird Society to:**

Faith Jones, Treasurer
Florida Bluebird Society, Inc.
763 Mallard Drive
Sanford FL 32771

Upcoming FBS Activities



- Sat. Oct. 12 **Festival of Flight and Flowers**, Eustis
10 a.m.- 3 p.m. Eustis Community Center, 601 Northshore Dr.
FBS will have a booth and provide a presentation as part of this day packed full of exciting environmental programs and field trips throughout Lake County.
- Sat. Feb. 8 **Passionflower Chapter Florida Native Plant Society**, Clermont
10 a.m. Cooper Memorial Library, 2525 Oakley Seaver Dr.
FBS Board member Faith Jones will present our “May All Your Blues be Birds” program plus information on the importance of Florida native plants to bluebirds, and some of the plants they like.
- March 12-15 **2020 North American Bluebird Society Conference**, Kearney, Nebraska
This will be a weekend filled with educational programs, field trips, and the opportunity to see the 500,000 Sandhill Cranes that visit the central Platte River Valley each Spring. In addition it will provide an opportunity to meet and talk “bluebird” with rooms full of fellow bluebirders. Details on flyer sent with this newsletter.
- Sat. March 21 **Region 4 Meeting**, Land O Lakes
Details TBA

2019-2020 Board of Directors

FloridaBluebirdSociety.org
fbs.inquiries1@floridabluebirdsociety.org

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Faith Jones*	Treasurer, Membership, Newsletter	floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com
Cheri Martin Spray ***	Director, Citrus Co. Coordinator	cheri.martinspray1@floridabluebirdsociety.org
Pam Overmyer***	Director, Bay Co. Coordinator	pam.overmyer1@floridabluebirdsociety.org
Bill Pennewill	Founding President	floridabluebirds@yahoo.com

Terms:

*2017—2020

**2018—2021

*** 2019—2022

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