

# The Florida Bluebird Society

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

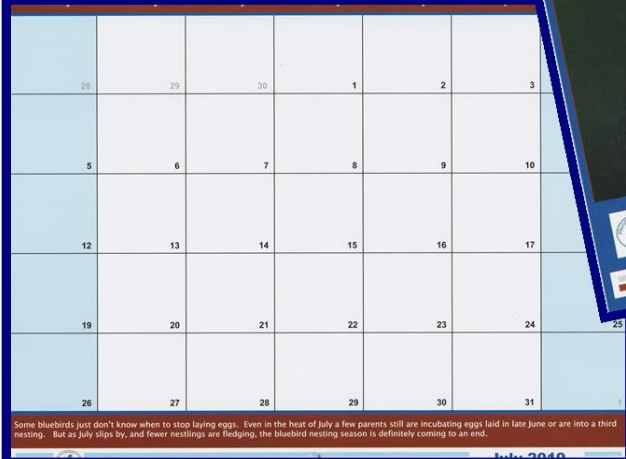


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Donations of at least \$10.00 will  
receive our Calendar as a thank-you gift.



## 2020 Calendars Available

The 2020 Florida Bluebird Society Calendar is filled with stunning images of our favorite birds. It includes monthly information regarding bluebird activity in Florida. Calendars are available for a minimum \$10.00 donation. Your donation check can be mailed to FBS, 763 Mallard Drive, Sanford FL 32771 or donations can be made using a credit card and the Donation button on our website [floridabluebirdsociety.org](http://floridabluebirdsociety.org). If you have any questions or special requests contact us at [FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com](mailto:FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com).



## Message From Our President

*Joanne Q. Heinrich*

I am very much looking forward to this coming wonderful year with the Florida Bluebird Society! Thank you to Brett Moyer who rolled off the board this year and a big welcome to new board member, Pam Overmyer! All other board members are dedicated to our mission and I could not be happier!



I love our mission and find it more and more welcoming to all than ever before: **The conservation and protection of bluebirds and other federally protected cavity nesting bird species in North America through educational programs and the collection and dissemination of pertinent and relevant information.** I don't think anyone would doubt my undying devotion to our bluebird, but I also had the pleasure of finding out more about other native cavity nesting birds this past summer, such as the beautiful wood duck and hope to share more experiences through the year. Would love to hear more from our members too!!! Do you have stories of bluebirds or other federally protected cavity nesting birds? We have a new email address that we monitor, so please send stories, questions, comments in to: [fbs.inquiries1@floridabluebirdsociety.org](mailto:fbs.inquiries1@floridabluebirdsociety.org)

We have a few new initiatives on our to-do list and we welcome member involvement.

1. How about that beautiful calendar!!! Yes, this year you have larger spaces in the dates section thanks to feedback from our members. Thank you! Next year, we hope to make it even better! Please send in any suggestions you may have.
2. We are thinking about an exciting nest-cam project. Calling all techy's out there who would like to be involved! We hope to have it up and running by the breeding season if possible. Details to follow!
3. More presentations and regional meetings. When I saw the calendar presentation at our annual meeting by Ken Custer, at one point, I closed my eyes and just focused on the sound of the audience's thrills at the pictures! Then when Rhonda Ockay spoke about the backstories of the photos, we just wanted more, didn't we? Let's keep the enthusiasm going. Any one of us can give a presentation to your club, group, or just some neighbors. We are dedicated to spreading the bluebird joy!

I'll wrap this up with a confession. I'm not very creative. Actually, that's giving me *too* much creativity, but I do know how to recognize those who inspire me...and our past presidents, Bill Pennewill, Cheri Martin Spray and Ken Custer, all inspire me in their own way. So much so, that I wrote my first poem in their honor:

### Ode to Past Presidents

Oh, how I wondered all great things you've done  
Amazed, with such grace, want to have it sung  
Well, now I hope to preserve  
The gratitude you all deserve



# October Surprise

*Bill Pennewill*



Someone once said that opening a bluebird nest box is like opening a Christmas present. You never know what you'll find inside.

Well, for me, Christmas came in October when I opened one of the bluebird nest boxes at the Penney Retirement Community.

Many nest boxes on the bluebird trail Linda Ashley and I monitor weekly seemed to have had more mites this past season. So one day the last week in October I decided to spray the interior of all the nest boxes.

As I approached one nest box a bluebird flew out. Puzzling. On opening the box I was surprised to find a nearly completed nest inside.

When monitoring the nest box on August 5 we recorded that three nestlings had fledged. Then, like all other nest boxes on the trail, this nest box was cleaned out for the season. This means that the new nest had to be built sometime between the final check on



August 5 and the end of October.

Normally I do not check nest boxes interiors during the winter. And it is not unusual, when inspecting the nest boxes immediately prior to the start of a new season, to find some pine needles or a few strands of dried grass.

Another box on the trail also had a loosely constructed partial nest. But a nearly completed nest – truly an unusual surprise.



## New Sobering Bird Statistics

“If you were alive in 1970, 29% of the breeding birds in the United States and Canada have disappeared within your lifetime.” This according to a recent Cornell Lab of Ornithology Report. Humans are at the root cause of this decline.

Habitat loss and habitat degradation are the biggest reasons for the rapid and staggering loss of birds across the continent.

What are the other leading causes of bird deaths because of humans? Annually, 2.6 billion birds are estimated to be killed by cats, and up to 1 billion birds are killed by window strikes in the United States and Canada.

These sobering statistics certainly reinforce the importance of providing our native birds with nesting locations and healthy habitats our yards and neighborhoods.

# What's Happening Outside?

*Based on information provided by FWC*

The month of November usually marks the arrival of Greater Sandhill Cranes who come to spend the winter with us. The Greater Sandhill Crane is one of six subspecies of sandhill cranes. They join our resident Florida Sandhill Cranes for the winter and travel to the Great Lakes region for the Spring and Summer where they breed.

This is a good time to see Northern Harriers gliding low over marshes. Look for their sleek bodies, long tail, long wings, and very visible white rump patch.

Keep looking up! This month White Pelicans begin migrating south to Florida. Bald Eagles begin their nesting season, and you may be able to see one of their spectacular aerial courtship displays. Some of our avian friends that we have not seen since last Spring, such as Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Phoebe, American Robins, and other northern songbirds, should start arriving for the winter.



Northern Harrier

Ken Schmidt

November is the peak month for roadkill of Florida Black Bears, so please drive with care in areas where bears are frequently found. This is also the peak of deer rutting season.

Florida Manatees start to head south to warm water sites when temperatures drop. Seasonal manatee Speed Zones change on Florida's waterways.

Listen for the Ornate Chorus Frogs' calls, especially if we have rain. Recordings of their calls are available online; search for "*Pseudacris ornata* calls".

Look for the color in Florida's Fall foliage as cypress trees begin turning rust color this time of year.

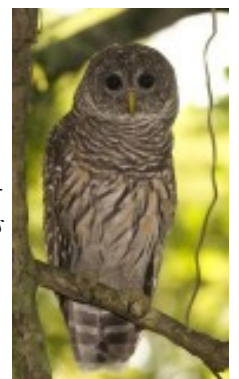


Great Horned Owl

Winter rains, shorter days and cooler temperatures present the perfect time for adding plants to your yard that will provide food for wildlife. *Planting a Refuge for Wildlife* available at <https://myfwc.com/viewing/habitat/refuge/> provides a list of plants and is a good place to start.

Listen for courting owls' hooting. Great Horned Owls say, "Hoo, hoo-oo, hoo, hoo," while Barred Owls say, "*Who Cooks for You? Who Cooks for You Awl?*"

This December, why not buy a live Christmas tree for later planting? Good choices are red cedar, holly or pine.



Barred Owl K..Schmidt

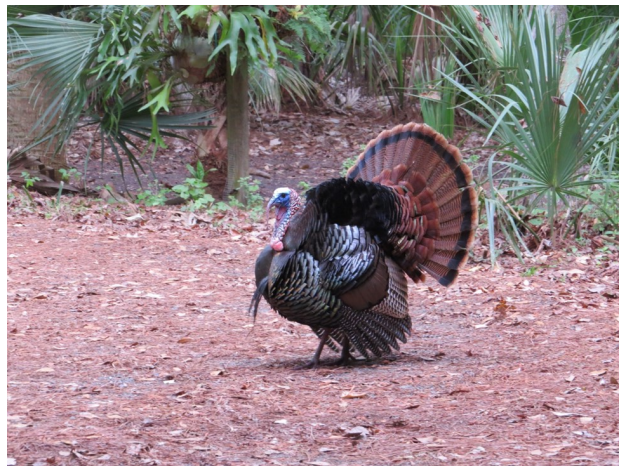
December and January are usually the best times for watching waterfowl on wetland, lakes and prairies. This is also when Right Whales appear off the east coast of Florida from Sebastian Inlet north.



## Fun Turkey Facts for Thanksgiving

The Florida Wild Turkey, known as the Osceola, is a subspecies of the Eastern Wild Turkey. It is found only in peninsular Florida. The Osceola is smaller; its feathers have less white, and show more iridescent green and red colors than the Eastern Wild Turkey. The Florida subspecies was first described in 1890 by W.E.D. Scott who named it after Seminole Chief Osceola. There are also three western subspecies of the Wild Turkey.

Adult females are similar to the male shown in this image. Females have a slightly duller head and neck. They also lack the male chest feathers. During non-breeding season, turkeys hang out in groups with other turkeys of the same sex.



*Photo by Faith Jones*

## Thoughts for Your Holiday Gift Giving



**2019-2020 Federal Duck Stamp**  
"Wood Duck and a Decoy" Art created by Scot Storm

### Help Conserve our Wetlands

Federal Duck Stamp purchases provide critical funds that are used to purchase and protect habitat in the National Wildlife Refuge System. These habitats benefit not only waterfowl but hundreds of other wildlife species.

Stamps are available at National Wildlife Refuges, Post Offices, and some sporting goods stores. They are an easy way to support wetland conservation and critical habitat preservation.

Duck Stamps make great gifts for anyone who cares about our National Wildlife Refuges.

## Support the Florida Bluebird Society when you shop at Amazon.com.

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the Florida Bluebird Society (FBS) every time you shop at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) you will find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to FBS.

To shop at Amazon Smile simply go to [Smile.Amazon.com](https://Smile.Amazon.com) on your computer or mobile device. On your first visit you need to select a charity to receive donations. We hope you will choose FBS. Amazon will remember your selection, but you can change charities at any time. You can use your existing account.



**#1 holiday hack:**

When you buy your gifts at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), Amazon donates.

**amazon**smile

## Do You Have Bluebird Data?

Kevin Corwin  
Colorado Bluebird Project Chairman  
and NABS VP for Affiliate Relations

The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) has been working to increase and improve our relationship with the folks at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, especially their NestWatch program. Since the mid-1990's NestWatch and its predecessor computer system 'The Birdhouse Network' have been collecting information recorded in the field - much of it by us bluebirders - and they have amassed a considerable dataset that scientists and researchers can use for research.

What most folks don't know is that before the computer systems there was a manual data collection process in place called 'The North American Nest Record Card System'. The folks at Cornell are now ready to transfer the information from these 300,000 handwritten cards to NestWatch. 60,000 of these cards are for bluebirds! They have set up a transcription process called '**Nest Quest Go**', now all they need is an army of us to help transcribe them. And we have the army - there are over 12,000 bluebirders in your organizations all across North America!



In case you are not a NABS member, attached to the same email as this newsletter is a two-page article about **Nest Quest Go** that was printed in the Fall 2019 issue of *Bluebird*. If you have any bluebird data we hope you will choose to get involved in this project. Now that the nesting season is over and all our nestboxes are empty, this project could be a great antidote to the post-partum blues we all experience this time of year.

I have started transcribing nest cards, and I can tell you by personal experience that it is quick and easy. Each card takes me about 1 to 2 minutes to complete, and I'm not a whiz at the keyboard.

## Bluebird Meeting Saturday January 25

The Florida Bluebird Society will provide an informational program about bluebirds on Saturday January 25 in the Performing Arts Center of the Heritage Pines Golf Clubhouse located at 11524 Scenic Hills Blvd. in Hudson Florida. The program will begin at 1:00 p.m. This will provide an opportunity to ask questions and share bluebird stories.

All are welcome. Heritage Pines is a gated community. Inform the gate guard you are there to attend the Florida Bluebird Society program and you will be given directions to the meeting location.



# WELCOME

## NEW MEMBERS

Cypress Business Communications—Jacksonville  
Carolyn Dixon - Penney Farms

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  
Billi Wagner - Vero Beach  
Richard Yeager—Penney Farms

### 2018-2019

### Sponsors

Libby Beese—Palm Coast  
Susan Beittel—Sanibel  
Candace Bridgewater—Ponte Vedra  
Ann Harwood Nuss—Jacksonville  
Shannon Joyce - Clermont  
Jean Middleton—Amelia Island  
Teri Pollard—Callahan

### Patrons

Ulla Benny—Gainesville  
Keith Laverty—Ormond Beach  
Jane Simpson—Fleming Island  
Nancy Stokes – Fleming Island  
Barbara Walker—Venice

### Organizations

Bluebird Pharmacy—Ponte Vedra Beach  
Cypress Business Communications—Jacksonville  
Native Nurseries of Tallahassee, Inc.

## Billi Wagner New Life Member



Billi with the door prize she won at the 2019 Annual Meeting

A Florida Native, Billi was born in Pensacola. She began birding in 1987 and has birded in some remote places, such as Midway Atoll where she was volunteering. In addition to WWII battle fame, Midway is famous for the plastic debris that washes ashore from the Pacific Garbage Patch, as a nesting ground for a million seabirds, and where the last few Hawaiian Monk Seals give birth. A new movie about it is coming out Nov. 8.

Billi has done much work the once barren yard around her 1954 home. Her yard is now a natural garden where wildlife is welcome. So far 142 species of birds have

been tallied there, and 12 species have nested in the yard. Billie is an avid birder and volunteers her skills. She surveyed Indian River County for the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas in the early 90's and again during 2012–16. Annual bird monitoring projects she participates in include JayWatch, nightjars monitoring, Christmas Bird Count, rooftop Least Terns, and EagleWatch. Her favorite birding destinations, besides her yard, are Australia and the tropics.

As far as cavity-nesters, her yard is not near any bluebird habitat, but she has hosted a pair of Eastern Screech Owls for about 15 years. The male is red and female is brown. Billie mounted a Wood Duck box that has been used a few times. Her Great Crested Flycatcher box is also occupied each summer. Another nest box she built was very small as it was for a pair of desperate Brown-headed Nuthatches that lived outside my work trailer in Osceola County. The minute she put it up the birds moved in.

Her knowledge of bluebirds was acquired when she built a bluebird trail in Osceola County while working on the non-migratory Whooping Crane re-introduction project in the early 1990's. Recently, she installed boxes in two locations in Indian River County where she currently lives. This project will be re-initiated in better habitat with thorough monitoring by volunteers next spring.

We are very pleased that Billi has become a Life Member of FBS.

## Upcoming FBS Activities

- Sat. Jan. 25 **Bluebird Program Meeting**, Hudson  
 1:00 p.m. Performing Arts Center , Heritage Pines Golf Clubhouse, 11524 Scenic Hills Blvd.  
 FBS is pleased to provide an informational program about bluebirds at this gathering. Please tell the Gate Guard your are there for the Florida Bluebird Society meeting.  
 Questions contact Hope Botterbush [esparanza2@gmail.com](mailto:esparanza2@gmail.com) or 727-233-2130
- 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](mailto:fbs.inquiries1@floridabluebirdsociety.org)

Joanne Heinrich**	President, Duval Co. Coordinator	<a href="mailto:joanne.heinrich1@floridabluebirdsociety.org">joanne.heinrich1@floridabluebirdsociety.org</a>
Ken Custer*	Immediate Past President, Pasco Co.	<a href="mailto:ken.custer1@floridabluebirdsociety.org">ken.custer1@floridabluebirdsociety.org</a>
Jim Nichols**	Vice Pres., Flagler Co. Coordinator	<a href="mailto:jim.nichols1@floridabluebirdsociety.org">jim.nichols1@floridabluebirdsociety.org</a>
Rhonda Ockay **	Secretary, Clay Co. Coordinator	<a href="mailto:rhonda.ockay1@floridabluebirdsociety.org">rhonda.ockay1@floridabluebirdsociety.org</a>
Faith Jones*	Treasurer, Membership, Newsletter	<a href="mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com">floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com</a>
Cheri Martin Spray ***	Director, Citrus Co. Coordinator	<a href="mailto:cheri.martinspray1@floridabluebirdsociety.org">cheri.martinspray1@floridabluebirdsociety.org</a>
Pam Overmyer***	Director, Bay Co. Coordinator	<a href="mailto:pam.overmyer1@floridabluebirdsociety.org">pam.overmyer1@floridabluebirdsociety.org</a>
Bill Pennewill	Founding President	<a href="mailto:floridabluebirds@yahoo.com">floridabluebirds@yahoo.com</a>

### Terms:

\*2017—2020

\*\*2018—2021

\*\*\* 2019—2022

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