

# The Florida Bluebird Society

Dedicated to the Protection  
and Conservation of Bluebirds in Florida



Volume 10, Issue 5

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## Message From Our President

Joanne Q. Heinrich



**Thank you** if you attended our first video webinar meeting in the 10-year history of the Florida Bluebird Society (FBS). As we have gotten many positive reviews, I am extremely excited about the possibilities it will open up in the next chapter of our group!

If you were not able to attend, you can still view a **REPLAY** of the FBS Annual Meeting Webinar August 2020 Meeting Recording: [https://zoom.us/rec/share/xv5pIq7f6GRIc5Xgwkr7X7AjI4m8T6a8hyZN-KUFyUtZyEuV81\\_mY8OVLJRJD8sSK](https://zoom.us/rec/share/xv5pIq7f6GRIc5Xgwkr7X7AjI4m8T6a8hyZN-KUFyUtZyEuV81_mY8OVLJRJD8sSK) Access Passcode: =C\$Qq?t4



I am so proud of our board members who contributed in so many different ways. I'd like to formally thank them: The presentation by Hope on the Heritage Pines Community Bluebird Trail; our 2021 photo Calendar presentation by Rhonda and Jim; our Q&A monitor and announcer Pam and critical updates from Faith. We have a great team!



**Membership and Newsletter **HELP WANTED!!!**** A Special recognition goes to Faith Jones, who not only this past year, but all past years, has been the go-to person of FBS, and is a "committee" all on her own as treasurer, membership chair, and newsletter preparer/editor! Now she is asking for help. **This help can come from any member or volunteer.** If you have a little extra time and are interested in helping Faith on membership or newsletter, please let us know and I'm sure we can find a

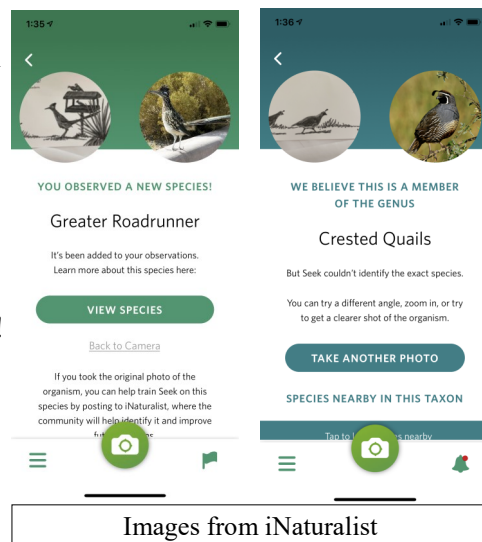
good match for how much time you can lend.

**Speakers Bureau:** Now that we have successfully pulled off a great annual meeting, we are furthering our ability to do presentations via the webinar functionality for your group or business! The ideas are endless! Please contact us to learn more about doing something like this for you; fall is a great time to start thinking about the next nesting season!!!

**Board Positions:** We have one open position for a new board member. Please let me or any other board member know if you are interested and we can set up a call to discuss.

**Cuban Treefrogs:** This was a hot topic at our annual meeting. There is an informative article by Pam Overmyer in this issue that hopefully will answer your questions.

Afterwards, I found (by accident) an app that you can have on your phone that may be useful in identifying animals and plants. I'm not recommending it just yet because I just started using it, but it identified an anole and what's more fascinating is I took a picture of some birds at the bottom of my Cornell FeederWatch renewal notice and it identified them!!! It's called "Seek" by iNaturalist. There is another app called iNaturalist that I downloaded too, made by the same company, but it looks more advanced and complicated, so I just started using the Seek app first. The next frog I see, I'm using it!



Please send us your stories! That's all for now. Be safe out there!



Cuban Treefrog (Invasive Exotic)

## An Unexpected Predator: Cuban Treefrogs

We often find critters other than birds in our Bluebird boxes. Spiders, wasps, and lizards are common inhabitants. I even found a Little Brown Bat in one of my boxes! But an unexpected visitor has been implicated in the loss of bluebird babies and eggs. The Cuban treefrog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*) is a non-native, invasive pest that is well suited to the hot, humid environment in Florida. They were first documented in the Keys in the 1920's and in Miami in 1952. They have become well established in central to south Florida, and are established in scattered populations in the panhandle, including a recently discovered breeding population in Bay County, which I have been helping to document.

Cuban treefrogs are considered invasive and detrimental to native wildlife, including native treefrogs, which make up at least part of their diet. Cuban treefrogs get larger than any of the native species, and have a voracious appetite; they will eat anything they can catch and swallow. This has caused a disappearance of native treefrogs in many south Florida yards.

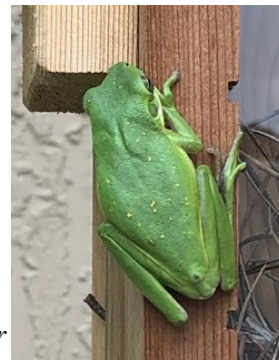
Cuban treefrogs are common inhabitants in bird houses. A recent presentation by Hope Botterbusch, who manages and monitors the Heritage Pines Bluebird Trail, showed loss of eggs in a box that was frequented by a large Cuban treefrog. It is very likely that they could also eat small hatchlings and nestlings. Current guards are not adequate to prevent Cuban treefrogs from entering through vents or the entrance hole of the box.

Because of the risk to bluebirds from these invaders, anyone who has Cuban treefrogs in their boxes should remove them. They should be humanely euthanized to help prevent further predation of native wildlife. Before euthanizing anything, the ID must be verified to prevent harming any of the native species.

For more information on the Cuban Treefrog, please visit the Florida Fish and Wildlife website: <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/amphibians/frogs-and-toads/cuban-treefrog/>

For more information on tracking and managing Cuban Treefrog populations, please see the University of Florida IFAS website; <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw259>

Pam Overmyer



Green Treefrog (native)

# 2020 Season Summary from Unusual Season at PRC

*Bill Pennewill*

This has been one of the most unusual seasons recorded in the 13 years of monitoring bluebird nest boxes at the Penny Retirement Community (PRC). Never, in all those years, have we encountered such a “tsunami” of puzzling oddities, which in some cases made record keeping somewhat problematic.

Since 2008 detailed records have been kept of the nest boxes on the trail, with the number varying yearly between 48 and 33 because of on-going changes at PRC. Linda Ashley, who has been keeping records these past few years, and I monitored the 35 nest boxes every Monday morning. The only exceptions were those few weeks when weather delayed the monitoring by a day or two.

Someone once said that **opening a bluebird nest box was like opening a Christmas present. You never knew what you were going to find.** That certainly was true this year.

Although individual incidents – such as new nests built on top of old nests or buried eggs – aren’t unusual, we seemed to have recorded more this season than in any single year in the past.

The season started normally in February. We found eggs in one box, one completed nest, a few partial nests and bats in two houses. We removed the bats and later erected bat houses nearby.

And the season still hadn’t ended in August, as it usually does. A nest box inactive since May now has a nestling scheduled to fledge in September. That’s a first recorded **September fledging** for this bluebird trail.

A few examples of the oddities encountered this season include:

On May 25 we recorded that nestbox #16 had one day-old fledgling and 3 unhatched eggs. The following week there was a new nest with three eggs on top of the old nest. The **fledgling was missing** and the eggs buried under the new nest. Buried eggs are not rare, but a missing fledgling is.

That was not an isolated experience. Throughout the season we recorded **six instances of new nests built on top of old nests.** Five times we recorded new nests built on top of existing nests containing eggs. In four cases, new eggs were laid in the old nests before they could be cleaned out. Fortunately, in one case, two of three eggs in an old nest hatched and two nestlings eventually fledged.

The one unhatched egg in that nest was among the large number of **unhatched eggs** recorded throughout the season. No record has been kept in past years of unhatched eggs. While there seemed to be more unhatched eggs this season that cannot be stated with any degree of certainty.

Full clutches of eggs in four boxes did not hatch although nestlings had fledged from three of those boxes earlier in the season. Most puzzling was the case of the disappearing, reappearing eggs. In one box one egg simply disappeared. In another box we recorded four eggs, then three eggs, then four eggs again when we cleaned out the nest.

Unfortunately the season also had its sadder moments. Seven eggs laid by a Chickadee hatched, and during our weekly nest check we recorded that they were approximately one to two days old. The following week we found all seven dead.

We also found **dead, fully feathered nestlings** in two boxes. Other “nest mates” had fledged from those boxes and there didn’t appear to be any obvious reason why these nestlings did not fledge also.

On the brighter side, at least we didn’t find any snakes in any of the boxes.

While those were a sampling of the oddities encountered, we also recorded that this season 210 bluebirds fledged from 30 of the 35 nest boxes on the trail. While far from the record 254 recorded fledging in 2012, it still was slightly more than the yearly average of 206 recorded over the past 12 seasons.





# My life inside the Bluebird Box

Here is my story as a bluebird baby: I hatched on July 7, 2020, along with my two other siblings. My mom laid four eggs but only three of us hatched. At 6 days old I had fewer feathers than my two siblings, so I apparently was developing a little slower than they but by fledge day I had all my feathers just like my siblings. On July 23, 2020, at 16 days old my two siblings fledged and left our nest box to venture into the world of the unknown. Well, I did not venture out as I was not quite ready, but hope my siblings are safe out there. It is day 5 since fledge day; I am now 21 days old and I am still in the nest box. My daddy is being the greatest father ever by bringing me lots of yummy, juicy bugs that are high in protein. He comes in the nest box for a quick visit to clean. My mom comes by occasionally to check on me as she is busy protecting and caring for my two siblings, I believe. I am trying to venture out, but something is holding me back. I think my parents understand, but my human watcher doesn't. She is patiently waiting for me to get the strength and courage to fly out just like my parents are waiting. I just wish my human watcher could understand my bluebird talk, but she truly believes something is not right with me so she checks on me daily.



Well, now at 22 days old and day 6 since fledge day, I am still in the box so my human watcher still believes something is wrong with me. She thinks it's serious so she had another human with experience with birds check me out thoroughly and yes, I have unseen injuries with a broken foot and some injuries to my wings and could not fly or walk properly. So now I am going away to a new home where more wonderful humans will care for me as I will likely not be able to live in the wild unless my foot and wings heal properly. I know my parents are upset and will miss me, but I am going to a better place to be cared for and, hopefully, live a long good life with the human family. I may need to reside with them for my entire life as they will raise me, providing my care and a place for me to live.

To my Bluebird Parents, I know you tried your best to care for me, but with the injuries I have, there was nothing more you could do. Stay safe out there and know I love you and miss you.

I am so truly grateful for having the humans monitoring our nest box because without them who knows where I would be or what would have happened to me being stuck inside the nest box. If it were not for the humans, I would not be getting the care I need to survive.

*By Rachel Pindar*

## Do You Have a Bluebird Story?

Have you had a special experience with a bluebird? Could you write a summary of your experiences during the last nesting season? We are always looking for bluebird-related stories to share with our members in this newsletter. Send your story and a photo, if possible, to [FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com](mailto:FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com).

# FBS Welcomes Two New Life Members

*When members upgrade their membership to our Life level or join at that level we ask them to tell us a little about themselves and why they made the decision to join at that level. FBS is pleased to welcome two new Life members. Here are their stories.*



*Beth Reed*

My love of bluebirds goes back to my teen years when my father, who worked for Blue Bird Bus Company in Fort Valley, Georgia, wanted to help the bluebird population in Georgia. He joined the Georgia Bluebird Society and put up over 50 nesting boxes on his property outside of town. He hired high school students to monitor the boxes and kept records each year of eggs, hatchlings and fledges from each nest box.

His love of bluebirds spilled over into my life. I even have one of his numbered nesting boxes in my yard in Lutz: No. 52. I feel a connection to my father, who passed away in 2006, when I watch my bluebirds. I had the nest boxes up for over 20 years before a bluebird pair decided to make a nest! Last year we had two clutches in a box near the lake. This year they chose a different box in the front yard where I could watch with binoculars from my breakfast nook. Then the pair started coming to my mealworm feeder right near the breakfast nook window! Talk about up close and personal! It was so very thrilling! After the babies fledged they started coming to the feeder, too! I love seeing the speckled babies knowing that the next generation is thriving.



Hopefully, they will nest again next year and we'll see multiple generations of bluebirds for years to come!



*Beth also shared some of her favorite Bluebird photos taken in her yard.*



*Jack Beery*

Jack Beery has been a member of the Florida Bluebird Society for a number of years. Jack lives in Okaloosa County, in the western panhandle. We asked Jack what made him decide to renew his membership at the Life level this year?

He explained that this year was one of those milestone birthdays and he had decided to give himself a present to mark the occasion. After some consideration, he decided there was no better present he could give himself than something to help bluebirds, tree swallows, and other native birds that bring joy to his life and the lives of others.

*FBS welcomes Beth and Jack as Life Members of FBS!*





# WELCOME

## NEW MEMBERS



Michael Krzyzkowski – Punte Gorda  
Lynn Lally – The Villages  
Kimberly Rexroat—New Port Richey



Annual FBS memberships are from August 1—July 31 each year. We would like to thank all of you who have already renewed your memberships. Your continues support is greatly appreciated.

If you have not yet renewed, there is a form on the next page of this newsletter or you can renew in the Membership section of our website

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

### Life Members

Madison E. Alderson - Williston  
Jack Beery— Shalimar  
David Foster—Jacksonville  
Ann Harwood- Nuss - Jacksonville  
Joanne Heinrich - Jacksonville  
Louis Nipper – Hernando (dec.2017)  
Pam Overmyer - Panama City  
Beth Reed—Lutz  
Billi Wagner - Vero Beach  
Richard Yeager -Penney Farms

### 2020-2021

### Sponsors

Libby Beese—Palm Coast  
Bluebird Pharmacy & Spa—Ponte Vedra  
Candace Bridgewater—Ponte Vedra  
Shannon Joyce - Clermont  
Jane Miller—Sanford  
Teri Pollard—Callahan  
Wild Birds Unlimited—Julington Village, St Johns

### Patrons

Ulla Benny—Gainesville  
Brenda Dillingham – Weeki Wachee  
Dave Keim - Clermont  
Frances Nichols—Orange Park

### Organizations

Cypress Business Communications—Jacksonville  
Native Nurseries of Tallahassee, Inc.



Bill Pennewill cleaning out one of the boxes on the PRC Trail

## Fall is the Time for Cleaning and Compiling

Once nesting has completed in your boxes it is time to clean them out. Bill Pennewill is pictured here with gloved hands, using a common spatula to remove nests. The nesting material is inspected for any unusual composition or content which is noted as part of data collection.

You should also inspect your nestbox for any needed repairs. The next few months are ideal times to make repairs or improvements on your boxes.

This is also a good time to compile all your data from the 2020 nesting season and submit it to Cornell Lab of Ornithology NestWatch at [NestWatch.org](http://NestWatch.org). Of course if you used their app to collect your data during your weekly monitoring sessions you have already submitted your data. Information on the app is also available on their website.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



**JOIN the Florida Bluebird Society**

Visit ***FloridaBluebirdSociety.org/membership***

**OR**

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 this Membership Application and your check made out to **Florida Bluebird Society** to:

Faith Jones, Treasurer  
Florida Bluebird Society, Inc.  
PO Box 532  
Penney Farms FL 32079

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Do you currently monitor a bluebird nest box trail?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, # of boxes \_\_\_\_\_

Location of trail \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Willing to actively participate in FBS

☐ Willing to serve as County or area coordinator

## 2019-2020 Board of Directors

FloridaBluebirdSociety.org  
fbs.inquiries1@floridabluebirdsociety.org

Joanne Heinrich*	President, Duval Co. Coordinator	joanne.heinrich1@floridabluebirdsociety.org
Jim Nichols*	Vice Pres., Flagler Co. Coordinator	jim.nichols1@floridabluebirdsociety.org
Rhonda Ockay*	Secretary, Clay Co. Coordinator	rhonda.ockay1@floridabluebirdsociety.org
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
Vacant ***		

Terms:

\*2018—2021

\*\* 2019—2022

\*\*\*2020—2023

The Florida Bluebird Society, Inc. is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization.  
Donations to the Florida Bluebird Society, Inc. are considered tax deductible.

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