

The Florida Bluebird Society

Dedicated to the Protection and Conservation of Bluebirds in Florida



Volume 9, Issue 1

2019

Florida Native Plants HELP Bluebirds

What is a native plant? Florida native plants are defined as any plant that was in Florida in 1513 when Europeans arrived.

What's the big deal about **native** vs **non-native** plants? Who cares where a plant comes from, as long as it does well and looks nice?

The issue is that plants grown in their native habitat grow under certain constraints including soil composition and nutrients, wind, rainfall, temperature, light, humidity, etc. Problems arise when a plant is removed from those constraints and transferred to a different set of conditions. The plant may thrive beyond all expectations or desires, as in this image. Such plants are classified as *invasive non-native* or *invasive exotic*. Prime examples are Kudzu, Air Potato, and Coral Ardisia.



Eastern Bluebird on Holly (*Ilex* spp.) by Glenda Simmons

Invasive non-native plants are among the greatest threats to existing ecosystems. They can wipe out native plants and destroy wildlife habitat. They can diminish the light, water, nutrients, and space available to native species. They can alter hydrological patterns, soil chemistry, moisture-holding capacity, and erodibility. They can change fire regimes, and in some cases may even contain toxins that may kill certain animals.

One of the best things you can do for bluebirds and other native species is to visit the website of the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council, www.fleppc.org, and determine if you have any of their Category 1 plants in your yard. If so, remove them. Replace them with native plants.

Why Native plants important to bluebirds

Native plants attract 96% more insects than non-natives. For example, a Chinese tallow tree grown in its native China will attract 400 species of insects. A Chinese tallow tree grown in Florida attracts only 3 species of insects. Parent songbirds feed their young mainly insects. A Carolina Chickadee needs 200 caterpillars per day to feed their nestlings. Bluebird's needs are similar. According to sialis.org, 68% of bluebirds diet is made up of insects. Insects are a vital source of needed protein.

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Because of the insects they attract, any native plant is better than a non-native plant. Be sure to choose a native plant that is suited for the conditions of the location in which you place it. Consider your cold hardiness zone, the soil texture and moisture, the amount sunlight available and the space. In other words, you need to put the right plant in the right place. There is no point planting a plant that require sandy well-drained soil and full sun in a shady, high moisture area. It will not survive.



Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

by Glenda Simmons

The Florida Native Plant Society has an excellent, interactive plant guide on their website that can help you choose the plants for your county, soil type, and available light. www.fnps.org.

Native plants not only provide food for bluebirds in the form of the insects they attract, many produce berries that are eaten by bluebirds. Berries are only produced by female holly plants and some other berry-producing plants. In addition to providing food, the greenery of native plants provide much needed shelter for birds.

If you love bluebirds, learn to identify and use Florida native plants. Support bluebirds and other native wildlife by planting the natives they rely on for food and habitat.

Suggested Native Plants

If appropriate for your location trees and large shrubs that bluebirds like include:

Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Southern Red Cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*), Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), Sugarberry/Hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*), Sabal/Cabbage Palm (Sabal palmetto), American Holly (*Ilex opaca*), Dahoon Holly (*Ilex cassine*), Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), East Palatka Holly (*Ilex spp.*), Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*).

If you are looking for a smaller plant, you might consider American Beauty Berry (*Callicarpa americana*), Blackberry (*Rubus spp.*), Blueberry (*Vaccinium spp.*), Wild Coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*), Elderberry (*Sambucus canaesis*), Fringe Tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), Marlberry (*Ardisia escallonioides*).

Resources:

Cerulean, S., Botha, C., Lagare, D. 1986. Planting a Refuge for Wildlife Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission.
 Osorio, R. 2001. A Gardener's Guide to Florida Native Plants. University Press of Florida.
 Smith, E. Z. 2018. Environmentally Responsible Landscaping for Bluebirds and Other Birds. Retrieved from Sialis.org
 Tallamay, D., Darke, R. 2009. Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Naïve Plants. Timber Press.





WELCOME

NEW MEMBERS

Courtney Ferguson	Jacksonville
Johnny Fox	Jacksonville
Nina Kinbrough	Lutz
Dolores Wesnak	Fernandina



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

Susan Beittel - Sanibel
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 Candace Bridgewater - Fernandina Beach
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 Michael Singer – Hernando

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 Cheri Martin-Spray – Inverness
 Nancy Stokes – Fleming Island

Organizations

Native Nurseries of Tallahassee, Inc.

Lucy Has Started Her Nest

Our camera in a bluebird nestbox in the Tampa area live streams the activity inside the nestbox on YouTube. This will be the third nesting season for our raspberry pi computer and camera configured for us by Ken Bell, our Web Master. The pair of Eastern Bluebirds who have occupied this nestbox are affectionately known as Orville and Lucy.

We generally recommend nestboxes be in place by mid-January as that seems to be the time when Florida bluebirds choose their nesting location. Orville and Lucy must be anxious this year as a nest is already being constructed in their nestbox. This may be a 2019 trend as Bill Pennewill also reported finding nest construction in one of his boxes in Penney Farms on January 14th

Check out the progress in their nestbox at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxk8TMGm5CuMTVknAjmFizQ/live> or via the link on our website, FloridaBluebirdSociety.org.



Faith Jones' presentation to Seminole Audubon Society December 9, 2018. She also provided a program for Ocklawaha Valley Audubon Society on January 6, 2019. No picture available.



Joanne Heinrich and Rhonda Ockay provided an educational program at the Wild Birds Unlimited store on Argyle Forest Blvd. in Jacksonville on January 19th.

If you know a group that would be interested in a presentation on Eastern Bluebirds send your request to floridabluebirdssociety@gmail.com. We do our best to accommodate all requests.

FBS Spreading Bluebird Information

FBS Board members have been active sharing their knowledge of bluebirds with a number of interested groups around the state.



Joanne Heinrich gave a presentation for the Towhee Circle of the Orange Park Garden Club on Jan.

Video of 2018 Nesting Season

FBS Board Member and avid bluebirder Dr. Brett Moyer has created a video that summarizes the activity along his "trail" last season. Here is a link to the video.

<https://www.facebook.com/bluebirdpharmacy/videos/2124884457774979/>

Upcoming Programs & Meetings

Florida Bluebird Society will provide informational presentations on Bluebirds at the following functions:

- Thursday February 7, 2019. 6:30 p.m. Wild Birds Unlimited – St. Johns. The store is located in Julington Village, 450 State Rd. 13, St Johns, FL 32259. 904-230-3242.
- Wednesday March 6, 2019. 10:00 a.m. This meeting is part of the Nassau County Extension Master Gardener Program; it is free and open to the public. The meeting will be held in the Nassau County Extension Office, 86026 Pages Dairy Rd, Yulee, FL 32097. 904-530-6350

Regional Meeting

Saturday March 23, 2019. 10:00—Noon. **Florida Bluebird Society Region 4 Get Together** . Suncoast Lakes Clubhouse, 10742 Burning Bush Drive, Land O Lakes, FL 34638.

Status of Eastern Bluebird Population

The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) has shared information from a recent analyses of the North American Breeding Bird Survey, a long-term, large scale international annual monitoring program started in 1966 to track the status and trends of North American bird populations. The data indicates the Eastern Bluebirds (EABL) have recovered nicely from the severe losses in the winters of the mid-1970s. But since 2005 EABL population growth has essentially halted. The currently growth rate is only 0.1% a year.



FBS Trail Upgrade Grant Announcement

Florida Bluebird Society is announcing our new grant opportunity to fund bluebird trail upgrades entitled: the FBS Trail Upgrade Grant. These grants are intended to further the mission and goals of the Society. All trail upgrades funded by FBS Trail Upgrade Grant must be conducted in the State of Florida and be primarily intended to upgrade the trail to FBS protocols, encourage safe use by Eastern Bluebirds and deter predators in the state of Florida. The secondary intention of the grant is to help bluebird enthusiasts learn how to maximize their efforts in attracting and caring for bluebirds. In keeping with the stated mission and goals of the FBS, secondary consideration also will be given to proposals for other federally protected cavity nesting species in Florida which meet the same criteria.

Florida Bluebird Society Trail Upgrade Grants will be awarded yearly, contingent on the funds available. Maximum amount awarded each year by the Florida Bluebird Society will not exceed \$1,500.00. This award may be granted to one or several applicants, depending on the objectives and significance of the proposals submitted.

Priority will be given to applications received from individuals or organizations with a demonstrated interest and ability in maintaining trails beneficial to the Eastern Bluebirds in Florida. Applicants must be members of the Florida Bluebird Society at the time the grant proposal is submitted.

More information on the FBS Trail Upgrade Grant will be posted on our website shortly. In the meantime, for more information, please email us at: floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com or call Joanne Heinrich at (904) 400-1459.

Flagler Palm Coast High School Bluebird Project

The bluebird project of the Flagler High School's Community and Future Problem Solvers group is progressing. The initial nestbox was installed at Nature Scape in Bunnell. This week members of the group and FBS Board



member Jim Nichols recently installed nest box #2 of 6 at the Palm Coast Old Kings elementary schools butterfly garden. It was quite an event with a ground breaking ceremony that involved a 1st grade science class and school administration. Next, nestbox #3 will be installed at Bunnell Elementary School.

We all thank Lowe's for providing the materials for predator guards & poles.





Save the date: March 12-15, 2020!

Join bluebird friends for the migration to the 2020 North American Bluebird Society Conference in Kearney, Nebraska.

This exciting and educational event is being hosted by



Speakers:

- Al Batt - Hartland, MN
- Bernie Daniel - Cincinnati, OH
- Myrna Pearman - Red Deer, Alberta, CA
- Stan Tekiela - Eden Prairie, MN
- Julie Zickefoose - Whipple, OH
- Sandhill Crane - speaker TBD



Activities [more to come]:

Sandhill Crane Viewing Blinds, Prairie Chicken Leks Viewing & Rainwater Basin Waterfowl Viewing Areas
 Prairie Culture Tour, Workshops, Exhibits, Silent Auction, Raffle and time to socialize with birding friends.

2018-2019 Board of Directors

FloridaBluebirdSociety.org

FloridaBluebirdSociety@gmail.com

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Cheri Martin Spray	Citrus Co. Coordinator	awesomeblues.cms@gmail.com
Brett Moyer, PhD	Director	moyerb@bolles.org
Jim Nichols	Director	jnicholspc@bellsouth.net
Bill Pennewill	Founding President	floridabluebirds@yahoo.com

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