Eastern Bluebirds

Bluebird eggs in nest

Bluebird chicks a few days old

Bluebird chicks 10 days old

Bluebird fledgling

Flatwoods Park
Main Entrance
14302 Morris Bridge Road, Thonotosassa, FL
West Entrance
Bruce B. Downs (CR 581) 1 mile NE of I-75 crossover

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A project of the Tampa Audubon Society, and the Hillsborough County Conservation & Environmental Lands Management Department
Flatwoods Park Bluebird Trail is a Success

Flatwoods Park Bluebird Trail helps once-threatened bluebird populations rebound from serious decline. The boxes provide nesting cavities for bluebirds, whose natural nesting cavities were taken over by English house sparrows which were introduced in 1851. Later decline was from habitat loss and pesticide use.

This bluebird trail has been in existence since the 1970s and monitored weekly since 2005. In addition to bluebirds, other native birds like Carolina chickadees, tufted titmice, and Carolina wrens also nest in the boxes. Occasionally, we also have Brazilian free-tailed bats and flying squirrels that take advantage of our safe nesting boxes to raise their young.

In 2005 the bluebird trail had 38 boxes and fledged 111 chicks. Since then we have added 18 boxes, for a total of 56. With the help of devoted volunteers, park staff and several Eagle Scouts, we have upgraded the safety of the boxes by placing them on their own stand-alone posts with a predator guard, to protect them from snakes, raccoons, cats and other predators. Each one is placed in the open where it is at least 8 feet from overhanging branches so predators can’t jump or climb onto the boxes. Our 56 boxes are now averaging 165 fledglings each year.

Some Interesting Facts About Bluebirds

- The bluebird is in the Thrush family and is about 7 inches long.
- There are 3 species of Bluebirds in North America: Eastern, Western, and Mountain.
- Only the Eastern Bluebird lives in Florida and lives here year round.
- The male has a bright blue back and a rust colored breast; the female is not as brightly colored.
- Nesting begins in March and ends in August in Florida. A pair has 1 to 3 broods.
- In Florida, the bluebirds use their boxes primarily during nesting season. In colder winter weather up north, they seek refuge in their boxes for warmth.
- During the nesting season, the bluebird eats and feeds its young insects. The remainder of the year, the bluebird also eats fruits and berries.
- Flatwoods Park, with its pine flatwoods and adjacent open areas is a perfect habitat for bluebirds because they need open space for insect foraging.

Flatwoods Park is a Hillsborough County Park with a seven-mile paved bike path as well as many unpaved wilderness trails. The 56 bluebird boxes are located along the bike path and are maintained by Tampa Audubon Society and the park staff.

When you visit Flatwoods Park, you may see a Tampa Audubon Society Bluebird Monitor opening boxes to count the eggs or chicks, cleaning out boxes, removing frogs or any predators.

Tampa Audubon Society and North American Bluebird Society ask that visitors do not open or disturb the boxes or bother nesting birds, because extra handling could cause the birds to abandon the nests.

Most Americans have never seen a bluebird. So, if you spot a flash of blue flying along the trail, take a moment to enjoy this special treat and be thankful that the Flatwoods Park Bluebird Trail is helping the bluebird make a comeback.