

This resource is based on the following source:

Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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American Coot *Fulica americana*

The repetitive vocalizations of this black, white-beaked bird characterize winter wetlands in Florida. It breeds from Alaska to Greenland and south to the West Indies and Costa Rica.

Habitat. American Coots breed in marshes with shoreline vegetation and require some open water and tall reeds for cover. The nest is built on the ground, concealed in dense vegetation on the shore, or floating on the water. It consists of a bulky pile of dead vegetation, often well raised. Usually 6 to 9 eggs are laid, but some nests contain as many as 15. The eggs are smooth, slightly glossy, and pale buffy-gray with fine brown and black spotting. Eggs are laid 1 per day and incubated by both sexes. Incubation begins with the first egg and takes from 21 to 24 days. The young usually hatch over a period of several days and stay in the nest for several days, when they are tended by both parents. After leaving the nest, they are fed by both adults for about a month and become independent at about 2 months of age.



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Seasonal Occurrence. Nesting in Florida occurs from March through August, but at least 1 record of winter breeding exists (Woolfenden 1979). The species is present almost year-round in many places in Florida; therefore, fall arrival and spring departure dates are difficult to determine.

Status. The American Coot is probably the most widespread and abundant waterfowl in Florida in the winter, but few birds remain to breed in the state. Nesting is sporadic, irregular, and unpredictable, and only a few pairs nest in any one location. The species is clearly a northern breeder with Florida at the edge of its breeding range.

Because many nonbreeding birds linger through the summer, only "confirmed" records and "probable" record during the "safe-dates" (1 May - 1 Aug, when migrants should not be present) are included on the Atlas map. Confirmed breeding ranges from Okaloosa County south to Dade County, but the distribution is spotty and irregular, with many large gaps.

Although no confirmed breeding records were found in the Florida Keys during the Atlas period, from 1986 to 1991, an adult with several young was present on the Stock Island Golf Course in May 1992 (F. Ford, pers. commun.).

Robert W. Loftin

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