

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.

This resource can be cited as:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. 2003, January 6. Florida's breeding bird atlas: A collaborative study of Florida's birdlife. <http://www.myfwc.com/bba/> (Date accessed mm/dd/yyyy).

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

The Anhinga is primarily a freshwater species, foraging underwater to capture its prey. The common name of Water Turkey alludes to its habit of sometimes swimming at the water's surface, with only its head and upper neck above water. It breeds in lowlands from Sinaloa, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee and east to North Carolina, then south to Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Uruguay (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). The Anhinga is a resident breeder throughout much of Florida.

Habitat. Anhingas are most commonly found in freshwater swamps, sloughs, marshes, and ponds. Phosphate mines are heavily used as nesting and feeding sites. In cities and towns, breeding colonies are located on islands in the center of small lakes surrounded by development. Anhingas are less frequently found in brackish and saltwater habitats; however, they will occasionally nest on mangrove islands (H. W. Kale, pers. commun.). The food of the Anhinga is almost exclusively fish that the bird spears with its bill, although a few insects and crustaceans are sometimes taken (Howell 1932).



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Anhingas breed in colonies, usually ranging from 6 to 10 pairs but sometimes containing 100 or more nests. Nests are frequently placed within large mixed-species colonies of herons, egrets, and cormorants. The nests are built of twigs and moss and are lined with leaves and small twigs. They may be found at almost any height, from 1.5 to 30 m (5 to 100 ft) above the ground. Three to 5 white to pale blue eggs, covered with a chalky deposit, comprise a clutch. The eggs take 25 to 28 days to hatch. The young birds remain in or near the nest until they are fully grown and capable of flight, but the age of the young at fledging is not known (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Seasonal Occurrence. Nesting often occurs during March and April, but earlier egg-laying dates have been established in south Florida. Fall observations of eggs and nestlings have been confirmed as late as December (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Most reports of migration are of Florida-bound birds sighted in October.

Status. The Anhinga breeds throughout the Florida mainland but is rarely seen in the Keys. It is most common in the southern and central peninsula, decreasing in numbers northward; and it breeds only in scattered sites in the Panhandle. Although Weston (Howell 1932) reported Anhingas breeding in moderate numbers in Escambia County, they were not found breeding in the western Panhandle during the Atlas project. Anhingas have increased in numbers somewhat during this century and have extended their breeding range northward in recent decades (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). During statewide surveys conducted from 1986 to 1989, Runde et al (1991) estimated more than 9,000 breeding birds.

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Anhinga

