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Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

To many Floridians, the Carolina Wren is the common house wren that nests in their sheds, garages, and other outbuildings. The species breeds in southern Ontario, isolated parts of southwest Quebec, and in the eastern half of the United States. The true House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) with which the Carolina Wren is sometimes confused, does not breed in Florida. However, it is a common winter resident throughout the state.

Three subspecies of the Carolina Wren breed in Florida: *T. l. ludovicianus* in the Panhandle; *T. l. miamensis* in the peninsula; and *T. l. nesophilus*, which occurs only on Dog Island off the Franklin County coast (Stevenson 1976).

Habitat. The Carolina Wren inhabits shrubs and dense undergrowth in deciduous and mixed woodlands and rural and suburban yards, wherever shrubbery or groundcover occurs. Its food consists primarily of insects and spiders, with occasional fruit and sometimes seeds, suet, and peanut butter obtained from bird feeders.

In forests, the Carolina Wren nests in cavities, tree roots, palm fronds, and boots (at the base of the frond). Around houses, it nests in practically anything hanging baskets, clothespin bags, garage shelves, nail kegs, and automobile grills, but almost never in bird houses installed specifically for its use.

The nest is round and oven-shaped and made of grasses, pine needles, hair, dried leaves, and always a piece of shed snake skin (or in this modern age, a piece of clear plastic that looks like snake skin). Three to 5 white egg speckled with reddish-brown spots comprise a clutch. Incubation takes 12 to 16 days, and the young leave the nest when about 12 days old (Haggerty and Morton 1995).

Seasonal Occurrence. Breeding begins in late February and continues, occasionally, into September (Stevens and Anderson 1994). Two or more broods are raised per season by some females (Haggerty and Morton 1995).

Status. One of the most widespread breeding species in the state, the Carolina Wren occurs throughout the Panhandle and peninsula but is conspicuously absent from the Florida Keys south of Key Largo. It is an easy species to confirm as a breeder because of its abundance, relatively small breeding territory, use of human habitations, and familiarity to many people. Confirmed breeding was documented even in briefly surveyed quadrangles by simply talking to local residents. Its loud and frequent calls and readiness to respond to recordings of Eastern Screech-Owl calls and "pishing" sounds make the Carolina Wren a highly detectable species. The only notable gaps shown on the Atlas map are the sugarcane fields in Palm Beach County and the Greater Miami urban area, where little or no suitable breeding habitat for the bird remains.

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Sponsored by Carol and Karl E. Peters



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Carolina Wren

