

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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## Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis*

Although this bird frequently sings on spring evenings and moon-lit nights, most listeners call it the Whip-poor-will (*C. vociferus*), a species which does not breed in Florida. The largest of our nightjars, the Chuck-will's-widow is seldom seen, unless flushed from its daytime roost on the ground.

**Habitat.** Open pine and mixed pine-oak woodlands comprise the Chuck-will's-widow's preferred habitat. It feeds mainly on large moths and other nocturnal flying insects. Occasionally it takes swallows, warblers, and hummingbirds swallowing them whole (Sprunt 1940). Although its bill is only 1.3 cm (1/2 in) in length, the mouth can open to 5.1 cm (2 in) and is supplemented peripherally by stiff bristles that expand the gape even further.

The eggs are laid on the ground, frequently on oak leaves in the rather open understory of dry hammocks. A typical clutch is comprised of 2 eggs, and there is no obvious attempt at nest building. The eggs are off-white or pinkish, with irregular lavender splotches. Incubation is by both adults and lasts 20 days. The young are capable of flight at about 17 days of age. This is one of the few birds that moves its eggs if the nest site is disturbed. A very strong nest-site fidelity is displayed.

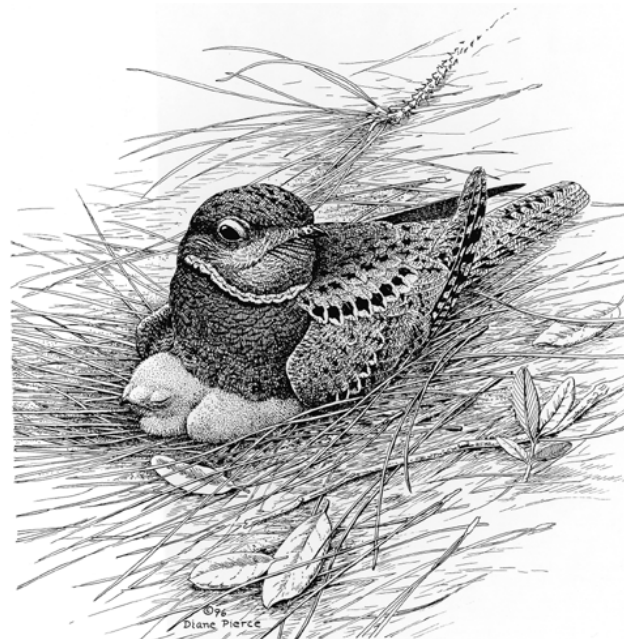


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**Seasonal Occurrence.** These birds occur statewide during migration, late February and early March, and then again in August through October. Egg dates are between March and June.

**Status.** Chuck-will's-widows breed throughout the state in appropriate habitat and are relatively common throughout the wooded portions of the mainland and upper Florida Keys (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). They are largely absent from wetlands, cultivated farmlands, and urban areas. Most of the gaps in the Atlas in central and north Florida represent a lack of coverage rather than a lack of birds.

Ted Robinson

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