

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).

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*

A familiar species in the eastern United States, the Eastern Bluebird frequents woods and roadsides throughout Florida. Long a favorite of farmers and rural residents, Eastern Bluebirds have benefitted from the use of human-made nesting boxes throughout much of their range, stemming a notable decline in their numbers in Florida.

Eastern Bluebirds breed from southern Canada through the eastern two-thirds of the United States and south to Central America and Bermuda. They winter throughout their breeding range from the northern United States to Mexico and Cuba.

Two subspecies occur in the Florida: *S. s. sialis* in the Panhandle and northern peninsula and *S. s. grata* from about Lake County southward (Stevenson 1976).

Habitat. The Eastern Bluebird is a bird of open woodlands, farmlands, and roadsides. It is especially common in open, mature pine woods, where broken stubs are available for use as nesting sites. Open pastures lined with old fenceposts are commonly used. It uses low perches to scan the area for food, feeding on or near the ground. During the breeding season, the Eastern Bluebird's diet is largely composed of insects, but fruits are also taken, especially in winter (Howell 1932).

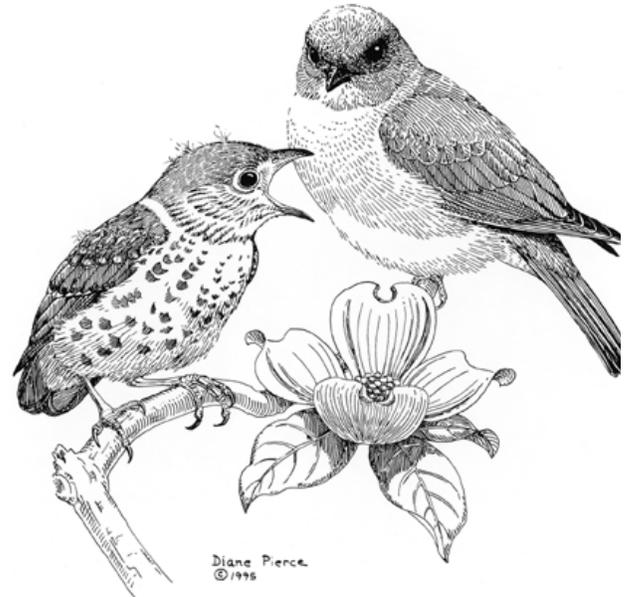


Illustration © 1995 Diane Pierce, All Rights Reserved.

The Eastern Bluebird is a cavity nester, utilizing broken stubs, old woodpecker holes, fenceposts, and human-made nesting boxes. The nest is a simple cup, consisting of woven pine needles and grasses. The pale blue egg 4 or 5 in number, hatch in 13 to 15 days. The young fledge in 15 to 20 days (White and Woolfenden 1973).

Seasonal Occurrence. Most nesting takes place between March and July, and extreme egg dates extend from 22 February to 18 August (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Most Eastern Bluebirds will raise 2 and some 3 broods each year. Juveniles remain with their parents during the entire nesting season, making up rather large family groups by the end of the summer.

In late October and November, an influx of Eastern Bluebirds from farther north greatly increases the population in the interior of northwest Florida, east to Leon County (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Status. The Eastern Bluebird is a common breeding species throughout northern Florida and in suburban and rural areas throughout the central peninsula. In southern Florida it is found in the Big Cypress Swamp south to extreme northern Monroe and Dade counties and is largely absent from areas south and east of Lake Okeechobee. A nest found in an abandoned Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavity in 1986 marked the first Palm Beach County breeding record in 30 years (Robson in Paul 1986). Up until the late 1950s it could be found along the pine ridge extending into Everglades National Park. Its disappearance in parts of its former range can be attributed to the destruction of habitat due to development and logging. Other factors possibly affecting this population are competition for nest cavities in suburbs from House Sparrows and European Starlings, loss of natural nest sites, diminishing winter food supply, adverse weather, and insecticides (Zeleny 1976).

R. David Goodwin

Eastern Bluebird

