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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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Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*

We notice Eastern Kingbirds soon after their March arrival in Florida because they choose prominent perches, such as utility lines, treetops, or fenceposts. They give a high-pitched call and fly out to feed or fearlessly chase other birds, regardless of their size. From these conspicuous sites Eastern Kingbirds conduct their courtship flights, and the male displays his white tail band to the female.

The Eastern Kingbird breeds throughout much of North America and, except for the Keys, is a common summer resident in most of Florida. Eastern Kingbirds winter in flocks in South America.

Habitat. In Florida the Eastern Kingbird is found in open habitats, such as dry prairies, agricultural areas, pine flatwoods, and suburban areas. Pastures with scattered slash pines are preferred habitat in east-central Florida; and C. Plockelman (pers. commun.) has noticed Kingbirds in proximity to horse barns.

The diet of Eastern Kingbirds consists mostly of wasps, flies, beetles, caterpillars, boll weevils, and mosquitoes (Sprunt 1954). They also consume small quantities of wild fruits and berries (Howell 1932). From their perches they dart after their flying prey or briefly hover to snatch an insect off a leaf.

The nest is a bulky cup constructed of grass, weed stems, and plant down, with a lining of soft material, such as grass, hair, rootlets, or flowers. The nest is placed from 2.4 to 7.3 m (8 to 25 ft) above the ground, most often trees but occasionally on horizontal supports of utility structures (Paul 1990, Cox 1991b). The 3 or 4 eggs are white, cream, or pinkish and mottled with shades of brown or lavender. Incubation lasts 16 to 18 days and is mostly by the female. The young fledge at 16 to 18 days of age, but they are often dependent upon their parent for more than 5 additional weeks (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Seasonal Occurrence. Eastern Kingbirds reach Florida in mid- to late March and remain until well into October. Nesting usually takes place in May (Kale and Maehr 1990) and may extend into August. Second broods are suspected but not confirmed (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Status. Eastern Kingbirds are rather common summer residents in most of Florida, although they are less common in coastal South Florida and absent from the Keys. Analysis of Breeding Bird Survey results indicates a strong decline in the population, the causes of which have not been studied (Cox 1987). Possible reasons for the decline include pesticide ingestion and loss of habitats such as fencerows and pine forests. Eastern Kingbirds are an uncommon Brown-headed Cowbird host and usually manage to remove or damage the intruder's eggs (Ehrlich et al. 1988). One successful predator on Eastern Kingbird nestlings in Florida is the American Swallow-tailed Kite [Editor: now just Swallow-tailed Kite] (Lohrer and Lohrer 1984).



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