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## Eastern Phoebe     *Sayornis phoebe*

The Eastern Phoebe is a common wintering flycatcher throughout Florida, most often seen perched on utility wires, fences, and treetops. The breeding range for the Eastern Phoebe includes northeast British Columbia and parts of the Maritime Provinces and the United States east of the Rocky Mountains as far south as Texas and northwest Florida. Eastern Phoebes winter from Mexico to Florida and north to Maryland and Delaware. They are casual winter residents in the Bahamas and Cuba and west to the Pacific coast (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

**Habitat.** Eastern Phoebes inhabit farmlands, wooded streambanks, and open deciduous woodlands. Their diet is composed chiefly of flying insects caught on the wing in typical flycatcher style, with berries and other fruit taken occasionally.

Nests were originally located in niches (Ehrlich et al. 1988) in embankments but are now most often located in or on human-made structures, such as bridges, culverts, ledges, or window sills. The elaborate nest takes 7 to 10 days to build and is cup-shaped; made of mud, plant material, and moss; and is lined with grasses, feathers, and horsehair, if available. Three to 4 mostly white, but occasionally brown-speckled, eggs comprise a clutch.

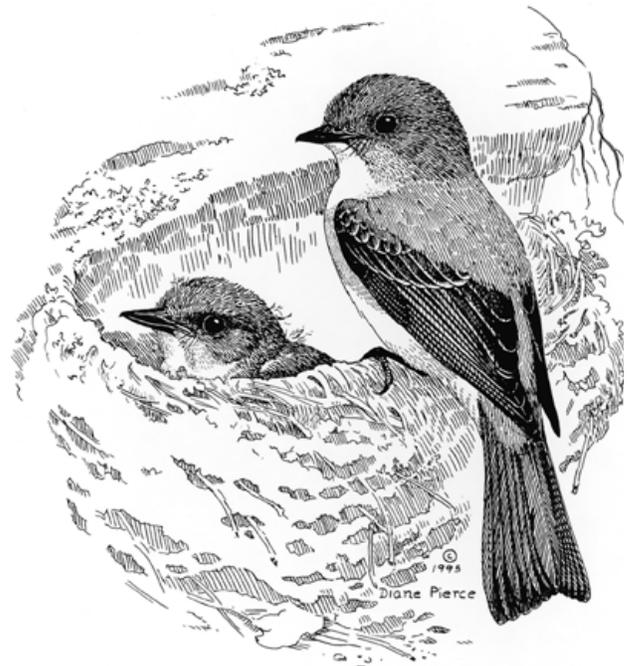


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Incubation takes about 15 to 16 days, and the young fledge in 15 to 16 days (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Eastern Phoebes are very common cowbird hosts.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** Phoebes usually arrive in Florida in late September or early October. Two broods are frequently raised per season. By April most birds have departed to breed north of the state. Therefore, it was one of the greatest surprises of the Atlas project when Eastern Phoebes were discovered breeding in Florida.

**Status.** The Eastern Phoebe population is rapidly expanding in the southeast, mostly in association with bridge construction (Ehrlich et al. 1988). The first breeding record was established on 28 May 1988, when a nest containing 4 young was found under a bridge over Pond Creek in Okaloosa County. The nest was located about 9.0 km (5.6 mi) south of the Alabama state line (Ware and Duncan 1989) in the Laurel Hill quadrangle. This nesting was about 193 km (120 mi) south of the previously known southernmost breeding locality. The nest was collected after the young fledged and is preserved in the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville.

On 20 April 1990 more than 837 km (520 mi) south of the Okaloosa County nest, a pair of Eastern Phoebes was found in a garage shed in Everglades National Park, just south of the Tamiami Trail in the Forty Mile Bend quadrangle in Dade County [editor: not included in the Atlas data]. Two young fledged from this nest (J. Robinson, pers. commun.). This nest was also collected and is preserved at Tall Timbers Research Station in Leake County. On 21 May 1990 Doug Runde observed a singing bird in Jackson County near the Georgia border. This bird was likely a local breeder.

The third Florida breeding record occurred in July 1990 and was located under the same Okaloosa County bridge as the first record 2 years earlier (Cox 1991b).

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