

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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Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

This adaptable species occurs throughout Florida, wherever suitable breeding habitat occurs. Its breeding range extends across the entire eastern United States, from southern Maine west to northern Wisconsin, then southwest to Arizona and California and north to coastal Oregon. It is also distributed throughout the Caribbean and through Central America south to the Panama Canal.

Habitat. The Green Heron frequents most freshwater and some saltwater bodies and is probably the most common heron in Florida's urban environment.

Famous for using leaves, feathers, and other items as fishing lures, this heron usually forages from branches above water or from the water's edge. The diet of the Green Heron consists of insects, spiders, snails, crustaceans, frogs, and fish (Howell 1932).

Although Green Herons often nest in mixed colonies with other herons and ibises, just as frequently they nest singly or in colonies of a few pairs. They build their frail platform nests of small sticks "loosely thrown together" (Howell 1932) in a bush or small tree growing near the water. Holt (in Howell 1932) reported herons that built their nests on top of Boat-tailed Grackle nests. A typical clutch consists of 4 or 5 pale green or greenish-blue eggs. The first 3 eggs are laid at 2-day intervals, the other at an interval of 1 day. Incubation takes about 20 days and is performed by both sexes. The young clamber out of the nest after about 2 weeks and remain in the vicinity until they can fly at about 3 weeks of age. They are probably independent of their parents when they are 30 to 35 days old (Harrison 1978).



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Seasonal Occurrence. The Green Heron nests between March and July. Many individuals winter south of the United States, and are seen in March and April moving north, especially during cold fronts at the coast. Fall migration dates have been established in September and October.

Status. There are few mysteries about the nesting of the Green Heron in Florida, it breeds almost everywhere! is clearly the most widespread nesting heron in the state.

The Green Heron is an easy species to detect. It is a habitat generalist, and most ponds, swamps, or marshes in the state support at least 1 breeding pair. It is highly likely that the bird breeds in virtually every quadrangle identified as "possible" or "probable" on the Atlas map. The "blank" quadrangles scattered throughout the state are more likely the result of inadequate coverage, rather than a lack of birds.

Robert W. Loftin

Sponsored by Barbara H. Hess

Green Heron

