

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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## Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis*

In its habits the Gray Kingbird is a typical flycatcher. It is conspicuous and aggressive and will chase away virtually any avian intruders from its territory. It shows little fear of humans.

Gray Kingbirds breed from coastal Georgia and Florida, west to Mississippi, and throughout the West Indies and Caribbean. It winters from south Florida, the West Indies, and Central America south to northern South America.

**Habitat.** The Gray Kingbird was formerly restricted to open coastal woodlands and beaches with scattered trees. However, it is now equally at home in developed areas, where it is often found inland. The bird perches on exposed limbs, power lines, or television antennas. From these vantage points it scans the area for flying insects, which it catches by means of a short, fluttering flight, often low above the ground or the water's surface. Fruits, berries, and small vertebrates are also eaten.

The nests are commonly placed from 1.2 to 3.7 m (4 to 12 ft) above the ground in mangroves (especially red mangroves) or oaks overhanging the water, occasionally in coastal pines. The nest is a flimsy structure, loosely constructed of twigs and the stems of marsh grasses, and is lined with fine grasses or rootlets. A clutch consists of 3 or 4 pinkish eggs mottled with shades of brown. Little else is known of the breeding biology of this species (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Seasonal Occurrence.** Courtship begins shortly after the birds arrive in March or early April. The male and female perform a rising, spiral flight, accompanied by twittering and bill snapping, and tail and wing spreading. Nesting generally begins in early June and may extend into early August. The fall migration period extends from October to early December.

**Status.** The Gray Kingbird is a common breeding bird within its restricted range in Florida. It is most frequently observed in the Keys and decreases in abundance northward along both coasts. Historically it was restricted to coastal areas as a breeding bird. Sprunt (1954) wrote the Gray Kingbird "is practically never seen inland." Beni (1942) states that it occurs inland only during migration; and Phillips et al. (1966) report that the species occurs only within 24 km (15 mi) of the coast. However, in recent years the Gray Kingbird has expanded its breeding range to include inland locations in South Florida. Atlas fieldworkers confirmed breeding in several inland quadrangles in Broward, Dade, and Monroe Counties, although some of the "possible" inland breeding records may refer to late spring migrants or nonbreeding summer visitors.

The breeding biology of the Gray Kingbird is poorly understood. Its boldness and loud "pe-chee-ry" call make the Gray Kingbird an easy species to locate. However, because of its inaccessible nesting sites, it may be difficult to confirm as a breeder in undeveloped areas.

Sean P. Rowe

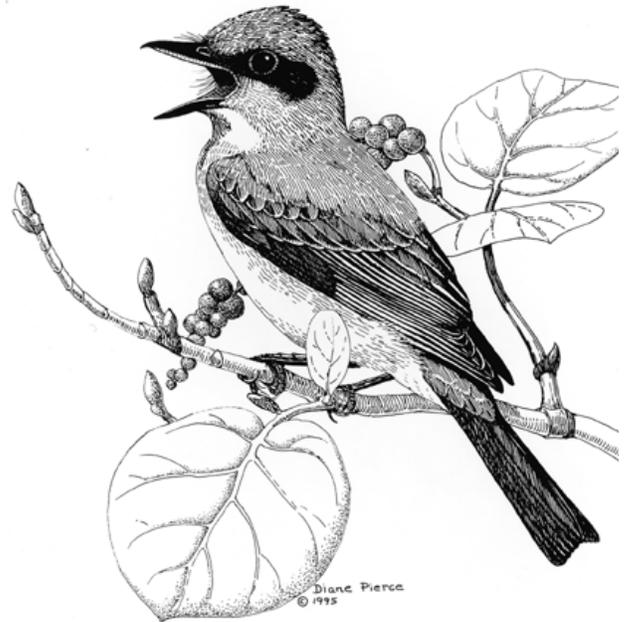


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