

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).

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

This small, handsome merganser declined drastically in the 1800s, but has since repopulated much of its former breeding range throughout the eastern United States and southeastern Canada. It has also expanded into the Pacific Northwest from northern Oregon to southern Alaska (Palmer 1976). The eastern population winters primarily in the southeastern United States and along the Atlantic coast from New England to Florida.

Habitat. The Hooded Merganser is a cavity nester and readily accepts nest boxes. On rare occasions, a pair will nest in a hollow log, on the ground, or in a burrow in a bank. The hen merganser lines the cavity with down from her own breast and lays from 5 to 12 glossy white eggs. Hooded Merganser hens are known to dump their eggs into another nest, including the nests of wood ducks, therefore, nests with more than 12 eggs may represent the output of more than 1 female (Ehrlich et al. 1988). The hen incubates the eggs for approximately 31 days. The nestlings are precocial and leave the nesting cavity soon after hatching. They are tended by the hen until they attain independence, at about 71 days of age (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

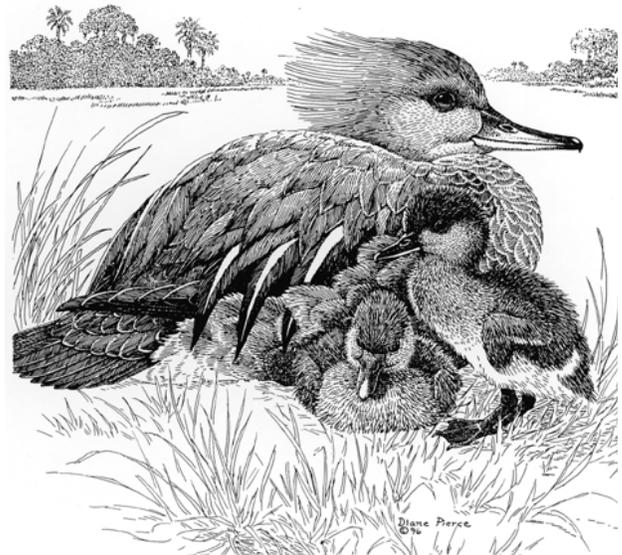


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Seasonal Occurrence. Most birds leave the state by April to breed in the interior of the continent. Arrival in the fall is in September and October.

Status. The Hooded Merganser is one of the rarest breeding birds in Florida. It is common in winter, especially in coastal estuaries, but most birds leave the state by April to breed. In the past, the species has bred in Hamilton, Volusia, and Hillsborough Counties (Repenning and Wester 1978). Of the 4 confirmed breeding records obtained during the Atlas project, 1 was located in the Panhandle, 2 in north Florida, and 1 in the central peninsula.

In 1987 or 1988, an employee of the U. S. Forest Service (fide R. Payne) observed fledged young accompanying a hen in Sumter County. The records from Baker and Union counties were nests located in wood duck boxes placed by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission [editor: now Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission]. At Ocean Pond, in Baker County, 1 box contained 12 Hooded Merganser eggs on 12 March, 1987 (D. Couch and B. Donner, VRF 1987). In Union County, nesting occurred on Swift Creek Pond, where a nest box containing 16 eggs was found on 3 March, 1987 (D. Couch and B. Donner, VRF 1987). In 1990, 1 hen and 4 ducklings were observed in a human-made pond near Juniper Creek in Calhoun County (fide B. H. Stedman, VRF 1991).

As this account was being edited, we learned of 7 more nestings, not shown on the map, 2 nests in Clay County in 1987, 3 nests in Hamilton County in May 1990, and 1 in Columbia County in June, 1990 (D. Couch [Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission [editor: now Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission]]); and on 6 March, 1992, a hen was found incubating a nest of 15 eggs in a nest box on Lake Lafayette, in Leon County (D. H. Brakhage and D. R. Eggeman, pers. commun.).

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