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Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina*

Brilliant yellow plumage set within a black hood distinguishes the male of this species from all others. Best known as a spring and fall migrant in much of Florida, the Hooded Warbler is a common and widespread breeding bird in the northern part of the state. It also breeds west and north to Nebraska, east to Rhode Island, and south to the Gulf coast and Texas. It winters in Mexico and Central America south to the Canal Zone.

Habitat. Hooded Warblers are found in moist, deciduous woodlands with a dense understory. They are particularly fond of low, swampy areas and heavily forested edges along rivers and streams habitats found in abundance in northern Florida. Except when the male selects a high perch to deliver his song, Hooded Warblers usually stay on or close to the ground.

Hooded Warblers feed exclusively on small invertebrates, such as spiders and insects (Howell 1932), that are frequently captured in flight.

The nest of the Hooded Warbler is placed in a bush or shrub, most often within 1 m (2 or 3 ft) of the ground. It is a compact cup built of strips of bark and plant fibers, lined with grasses, rootlets, and other fine materials. Grimes (1935 in Stevenson and Anderson 1994) stated that most Florida nests contain 3 eggs, although some contain 4. The eggs are creamy-white, marked with brown, and are incubated by both parents for 12 days. The young fledged at 8 or 9 days of age (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Seasonal Occurrence. This trans-Gulf migrant is seen in Florida between mid-March and mid-April and again September and October. Egg dates range between 28 April and 8 July (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Status. The Hooded Warbler occurs throughout the Panhandle but has a patchy distribution in north Florida, south to Levy and Marion (possibly Lake) counties. The Atlas map indicates a southeastern extension of its breeding range into Alachua, Putnam, and Marion counties when compared to the map published by Howell (1932).

Despite the male's spectacular plumage and the active foraging behavior of the species, the dense undergrowth preferred by Hooded Warblers frequently prevents them from being seen. Even so, their distinctive song and call notes, combined with their relative abundance and readiness to respond to Eastern Screech-Owl tapes and "pishing," allowed Atlas fieldworkers to detect the birds in most of the quadrangles in which they occurred. The scattered blank spots in the Panhandle can probably be attributed to insufficient coverage, but the large gap in north Florida, representing more than 2,331 km² (900 mi²), cannot be satisfactorily explained. Based on the habitat that exists in most of Suwannee County, Hooded Warblers must occur there; therefore it is somewhat of a mystery why they were not recorded there.

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Sponsored by Barbara P. Muschlitz



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Hooded Warbler

