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Kentucky Warbler *Oporornis formosus*

A secretive ground-dwelling songbird, the Kentucky Warbler is a little-known breeder in the state. It breeds from Nebraska northeast to Connecticut and south to Texas, the north Gulf coast, and South Carolina. Kentucky Warblers winter from Veracruz south to Venezuela.

Habitat. During the breeding season the Kentucky Warbler is found in moist, deciduous woodlands with a dense understory.

Kentucky Warblers feed on spiders, insects, and occasionally berries (Bent 1953).

Both parents build the nest, placed on or very close to the ground in moist woodlands or along rivers and streams. The nest is a bulky cup, constructed of leaves, grass, and strips of bark, lined with rootlets. A typical clutch consists of 4 or 5 white eggs, "sprinkled with reddish and lilac spots" (Sprunt 1954). The female incubates the eggs for 12 or 13 days. After 8 to 10 days, the young fledge (Ehrlich et al. 1988). The number of broods raised per year is not known.



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Seasonal Occurrence. Spring arrival dates range from mid-March through the end of May. In fall these warblers have been recorded from late July through the end of October. Eggs have been found May through June (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Status. The Kentucky Warbler, first found nesting in Florida in Escambia County in 1932 (Weston 1932), has extended its breeding range eastward in recent decades. Extensive Atlas fieldwork in the species' breeding range, including some previously little-surveyed counties, documented breeding east to Suwannee County where Pranty (in Paul 1991) observed a juvenile accompanied by an adult on 28 July 1990. Although it is possible the "juvenile" was a molting adult in migration, as suggested by Stevenson and Anderson (1994), the record is tentatively accepted as being the easternmost breeding record in Florida and the first outside the Panhandle, pending further review.

The bird's retiring habits and choice of dense habitat make its detection difficult. Also, the male's "churry churr churry" song is similar to songs of the Carolina Wren. Coverage in north Florida was less extensive, due to a lack of local observers. Still, the Kentucky Warbler was more common than previously thought. However, breeding is clearly difficult to confirm, as shown on the accompanying map. Counting the Suwannee County record, only 8 confirmed breeding records were obtained during the Atlas project.

Bill Pranty

Kentucky Warbler

