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## Louisiana Waterthrush      *Seiurus motacilla*

The Louisiana Waterthrush is one of the rarest and least studied of Florida's breeding birds. It breeds from Nebraska northeast to New Hampshire and south to the northern Gulf coast, and winters from central Florida south to South America and the West Indies.

**Habitat.** True to its name, the Louisiana Waterthrush selects nest sites in wooded areas along a creek, a stream, or a wooded swamp. The nest, frequently located in exposed roots of a fallen tree, is constructed of leaves and twigs and lined with soft plant materials. Eggs are white, often marked with browns and grays, and number 4 to 6 per nest. Incubation lasts 13 days, and the young fledge at 10 to 12 days of age (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Louisiana Waterthrushes feed chiefly on insects and spiders, but mollusks and even fish are taken on occasion (Howell 1932).

**Seasonal Occurrence.** Louisiana Waterthrushes are among the earliest of spring trans-Gulf migrants (February to May) and also leave the state as early as mid-June. Eggs have been found in April and May. Brewer (1992) observed a fledgling being fed by adults on 9 June 1991 in Leon County.

**Status.** The state's first breeding record for the Louisiana Waterthrush occurred in Walton County on 8 April 1961, when Henry Stevenson (1961) found a nest with 5 eggs. Its breeding range in Florida is believed to be limited to the Panhandle, with breeding possibly occurring south to Alachua County (Austin 1965). Gould (1933) lists a "probable" breeding record in Polk County and a confirmed breeding record in DeSoto County, far south any other known breeding site in the state. However, Robertson and Woolfenden (1992) and Stevenson and Anderson (1994) question Gould's records.

Because Louisiana Waterthrushes begin fall migration in mid-June (Stevenson and Anderson 1994), it is difficult to determine the breeding range of the species in Florida. The Atlas accepted all records up to 15 July; therefore the "possible" and "probable" breeding records shown on the Atlas map must be handled with great caution, especially those in central Florida.

All confirmed breeding records of the Louisiana Waterthrush in the state have been located in the Panhandle, including the 3 recorded during the Atlas project. The cluster of records around Tallahassee may indicate a large area of suitable breeding habitat, or it may be the result of an unusually large degree of fieldwork in that area.

Bill Pranty



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