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Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*

A common resident in much of the West Indies and Middle America, in the United States the Mangrove Cuckoo breeds only in Florida.

Habitat. The Mangrove Cuckoo inhabits dense mangrove swamps and tropical hardwood hammocks. It glides silently, like a shadow, through the forests, occasionally emitting a ponderous, guttural "gaw-gaw-gaw." Although elusive, it is surprisingly tame when approached and responds readily to taped Mangrove Cuckoo calls. The Mangrove Cuckoo feeds on hairy caterpillars, moths, spiders, small frogs, and fruits and berries taken from the ground or from trees and shrubs (Terres 1980).

The nest, usually located in a thicket or dense forest, is a frail, flat structure composed of twigs. It is similar to the nest of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo (Howell 1932). A clutch consists of 2 or, rarely, 3 pale blue eggs (Harrison 1975). The length of incubation and the age of the young at fledging are not known (Ehrlich et al. 1988).



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Seasonal Occurrence. Nesting occurs from May through July, perhaps into early August, and may include 2 broods (Sprunt 1954).

Status. The Mangrove Cuckoo occurs throughout the Keys, northward to southern Miami on the Atlantic coast, and to the Anclote Keys in Pasco County on the Gulf coast (Howell 1932). It is rare to locally common within the limited range, but was confirmed breeding only in 6 quadrangles in Dade and Monroe counties. It has occurred far north as Indian River County (M. Browman, pers. obs.), but none were reported on the east coast or north Dade County during the Atlas period. Because of its reclusive and secretive habits, very little is known about its year-round population status, distribution, and reproductive biology.

On 4 May 1989 in Everglades National Park, Langridge (1990a) observed Mangrove Cuckoo courtship feeding without copulation. McNair (1991) observed copulation without courtship feeding on 24 May 1990 on Key Largo. These sightings suggest that courtship feeding is part of the breeding cycle of the Mangrove Cuckoo; however, is neither a prerequisite for, nor necessarily a precursor to, copulation.

Of the 9 "confirmed" breeding records obtained during the Atlas project, 2 were of occupied nests, 2 of recently fledged young, 4 of adults carrying food, and 1 record was of adults feeding young. On 3 June 1986, Mort Coop observed both parents feeding golden orb spiders to 2 recently fledged young in Dade County. Although we have gained some information about this enigmatic bird during the past 6 years, there is still much to learn.

M. C. Wheeler

Sponsored by Margaret R. Brown

Mangrove Cuckoo

