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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.

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Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is sleek, elegant, and elusive, with buoyant gliding flight and reclusive habits. It breeds from California, Utah, Colorado, the Dakotas, and southern Canada south to Mexico, the Gulf coast, the Antilles, and the Bahamas (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Habitat. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo inhabits deciduous forests, cypress swamps, hammocks, and dense thickets along roads, canals, and ponds. Although it tends to avoid urban and suburban areas, it may be found in parks and large undeveloped tracts of land relatively close to civilization. It has been observed in the summer in sugarcane areas in Palm Beach and Hendry counties, where there are few trees or shrubs. The diet of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo consists mainly of hairy caterpillars, but it will consume other insects and their larvae, small lizards, frogs, birds' eggs, and small fruits and berries (Ehrlich et al. 1988). The nest is a flat flimsy structure made of twigs and small roots and sparsely lined with dry leaves, moss, grass, or catkins (Howell 1932, Terres 1980). It is generally located in a bush or on a horizontal limb of a tree 2 to 12 ft above the ground (Terres 1980). A clutch consists of 3 to 6 pale blue eggs, which are laid at 2- or 3-day intervals. Incubation by both parents begins with the first egg and lasts 14 to 15 days. Occasionally, the female will become a brood parasite, laying her eggs in the nest of another species (Howell 1932, Terres 1980). The young hatch asynchronously. They easily climb around the nesting tree 7 to 9 days after hatching and can fly at 3 weeks (Ehrlich et al. 1988).



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Seasonal Occurrence. Yellow-billed Cuckoos usually nest in Florida between May and August (Howell 1932). According to Stevenson and Anderson (1994), this bird migrates northward so late that its spring migration is hard to distinguish from its journey south.

Status. Although heard more often than seen, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is a fairly common breeding resident throughout Florida. Many of the blank spots on the Atlas map probably represent missed birds rather than absence of the species. Its shyness and propensity to nest in dense thicket, however, make it moderately difficult to confirm breeding.

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Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

