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## Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*

The Yellow Warbler is a common breeder in much of North America, from northwest Alaska, throughout Canada, and south to northern Mexico and the southeastern United States. The Yellow Warbler breeds in the state only in coastal South Florida and the Keys. The subspecies breeding in Florida, the Cuban Golden Warbler (*D. p. gundlachi*), is apparently a recent colonizer, first found breeding in 1941 (Greene 1942).

**Habitat.** In Florida the breeding subspecies nests in dense stands of small to medium-sized red mangroves growing along the shores of small islands, canals, and tidal streams (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Yellow Warblers feed largely on insects, but a few berries are also taken. They feed midstory or lower in the mangroves.

Prior to the Atlas project, the original Yellow Warbler nest found by Earle Greene was the only Florida nest reported. It was constructed of "seaweed and feathers" (Greene 1942). During the Atlas project, 3 more nests were discovered. One was built in a black mangrove 2.1 m (7 ft) above the ground, and another nest was found 1.8 (6 ft) high in a red mangrove. Both nests were constructed of grass (J. Parter, pers. commun.).

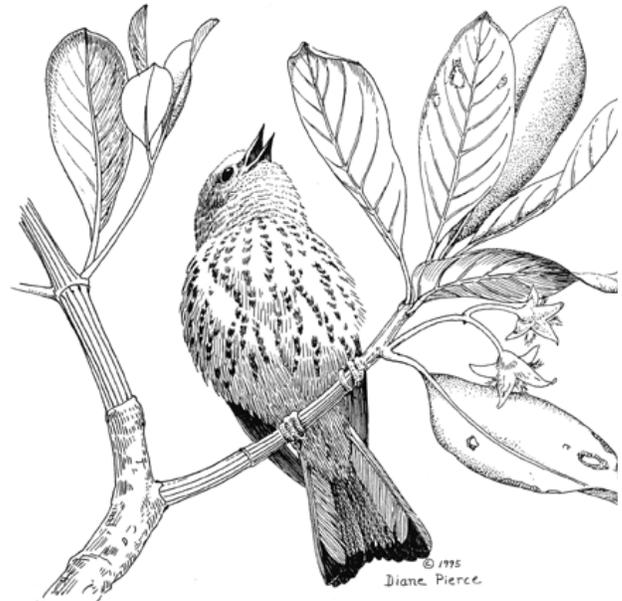


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Yellow Warblers build a cup-shaped nest in mangroves. A clutch consists of 3 to 6 off-white to pale green eggs with olive, gray, and brown spots. Incubation is solely by the female and requires 11 to 12 days. Young birds fledge at 9 to 12 days of age (Ehrlich et al. 1988). The number of broods raised per season is not known.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** *D. p. gundlachi* is a breeding resident in extreme south Florida and the Keys. Other populations of Yellow Warblers are migrants through the state.

**Status.** Restricted to Monroe and Dade (and possibly southern Collier) counties, Yellow Warblers are found primarily in red mangroves. Because of their limited range, it is felt that very few breeding Yellow Warblers were overlooked during the Atlas project. The male's song is loud and repeated frequently, and "singing male" was the most frequently reported code. Confirming breeding is difficult because of the generally inaccessible, wet, mosquito-infested haunts chosen by the species. Only 3 nests were found, but fledged young accounted for the most frequently used confirmed code.

Nest parasitism by *Brown-headed* and *Shiny Cowbirds*, both recent invaders of south Florida, is a serious threat. In a recent study in Puerto Rico, more than 63% of the Yellow Warbler nests were parasitized by *Shiny Cowbird* (Cruz et al. 1985). Fortunately, the number of Yellow Warblers that fledged from parasitized nests was not much lower than the number that fledged from nonparasitized nests (2.1 versus 2.6) unlike the *Black-whiskered Vireo* which suffered great losses from brood parasitism. Better concealment of their nests is thought to be the reason Yellow Warbler nests contain fewer *Shiny Cowbird* eggs (Cruz et al. 1985).

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Sponsored by Lawrence and Julia Nelson

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