

## MANGROVE CUCKOO

*Coccyzus minor*

**Order:** Cuculiformes

**Family:** Cuculidae

**FNAI Ranks:** G5/S3

**U.S. Status:** none

**FL Status:** none



**Description:** Like most cuckoos, the mangrove cuckoo is a slender, long-tailed bird that is about the length of the more familiar mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). Tail constitutes more than half the length of this very secretive bird. Underside is pale white but gradually becomes darker, creamy buff, especially towards the lower belly. Back is grayish brown. Most prominent field marks are a black mask and six white spots, positioned in pairs, lengthwise under each side of the long tail. The upper bill is dark; lower bill is yellow.

**Similar Species:** Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) is also found commonly in Florida in spring, summer, and fall, but it has reddish-brown patches on the wing. Yellow-billed cuckoos also lack the buffy coloration on the lower belly, have a yellowish base on the upper bill, and lack a black mask.

**Habitat:** Mangrove forests throughout many areas of Florida and tropical hammocks in the Florida Keys and nearby mainland areas. Habitat requirements are poorly known, but in the case of tropical hardwood hammocks, larger forest tracts seem to be preferred. Almost all of the larger tracts remaining occur on public lands in south Florida. Mangrove cuckoos avoid heavily developed areas.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Much more commonly observed during spring, summer, and fall, but winter records also exist. Given the secretive nature of this bird, it could be overlooked in winter.

**Florida Distribution:** Breeding range extends along Gulf coast northward to Tampa Bay and possibly southern Pasco County. Breeding range along Atlantic coast extends at least to Virginia Key, Miami-Dade County. Breeds throughout the Florida Keys where suitable habitat conditions exist. Winter range overlaps to some degree with breeding range, but records are much scarcer and patchily distributed. Peripheral

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sightings in Indian River, Palm Beach, and Franklin counties.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Resident along Gulf coast from northern Mexico south to Nicaragua and from central Florida south through the Antilles. Found on most islands in the southern Gulf, the Bahamas, and to northern Brazil.

**Conservation Status:** Most of the remaining available habitat is on public land. The conservation status of this species thus would appear to be secure, but further studies of its habitat requirements, breeding biology, and migration patterns, if any, are needed.

**Protection and Management:** Focus management on life-history studies that better document habitat requirements, seasonal occurrences, and breeding success.

**References:** Poole and Gill (eds.) 1994, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Rodgers et al. (eds.) 1996, Stevenson and Anderson 1994.



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