

Black-billed Cuckoo

Coccyzus erythrophthalmus

General Information:

-This shy bird spends most of its time skulking in deep wooded forests. In rare instances, instead of incubating its own eggs, it will lay its eggs in the nest of Yellow-Billed Cuckoos, Gray Catbirds, Wood Thrushes, Yellow Warbler, or Chipping Sparrows. In flight, note the long tail, which has small crescent-shaped white spots on the tips of all but the two central tail feathers, and the uniformly grayish brown wings and back.

Song:

-Generally silent but have a repeated monotone *cu-cu-cu* or *cu-cu-cu-cu* in series of 3-4 notes. Also gives a series of rapid *kwk,kwk,kwk* notes on a single pitch. Sometimes sings at night.

Behavior:

-Skulks through thick vegetation in shrubs and trees. Often sits quietly on branches scanning in all directions before changing perches. Eats primarily caterpillars, especially hairy tent caterpillars, and other insects; occasionally eats small mollusks, fish, and some wild fruits. Often found in damp thicket and wet place. Engages in courtship feeding.



Breeding:

-Monogamous.

Nesting:

-Incubation 10-14 days but both sees. The 1 brood per year of altricial young stay in nest 7-9 days, are fed by both sexes, and leave nest before they can fly and climb around on nest tree or shrub for 14 days.

Population:

-Uncommon to fairly common. They are somewhat dependant on caterpillar populations; larger clutches laid when food is plentiful.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- To create an environment friendly to the Black-billed Cuckoo I suggest planting deciduous trees such as the Swamp White Oak, Red Oak, Silver Maple, and River Birch along with a few Balsam Firs for cover. Furthermore, berry producing shrubs, along with American and Beaked Hazelnut are a good bet. I also recommend planting wildflowers that create a lot of seeds, such as the Wild Lupine, Ironweed, Fireweed, Cup-Plant, Prairie Dock, Compass Plant, and any of the Blazingstars. .