

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Coccyzus americanus

General Information:

-Like most of the cuckoos, this bird prefers to perch unobtrusively in thick forests or shrubs. Many rural people know this bird as the “Rain Crow.” It sometimes lays its eggs in the nests of the Black-Billed Cuckoo, but rarely in the nest of other birds. In flight, note the long tail and the contrast of rufous primaries against gray-brown wing coverts and upper-parts.

Song:

-Often silent; song heard more often in summer. The song is a monotonous throaty *ka-ka-ka-kow-kow-kow-kow-kowlp-kowlp-kowl*, which lowers in volume and tone toward the end.

Behavior:

-Slips quietly and somewhat stealthily through tangles; flies easily from tree to tree. Often sits motionless on an interior branch and slowly surveys the surrounding vegetation. It eats mostly hairy caterpillars; also insects, larvae, and small fruits and berries. Sometime eats small frogs and lizard and the eggs of other birds. Engages in courtship feeding in which the male lands by the perched female, climbs on her shoulder, and places food in her bill.



Breeding:

-Monogamous and a solitary nester.

Nesting:

-Incubation 9-11 days by both sexes. The 1 brood per year of altricial young stay in nest 7-9 days and are fed by both sexes. Young leave the nest before they are able to fly, but remain in vicinity, climbing in branches; fed by parent of about 14 more days.

Population:

-Uncommon to common, and is somewhat dependent on caterpillar populations; species produces greater number of eggs when food is plentiful.

Conservation:

-Neo-tropical migrant that has declined significantly over much of its range.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

-If you would like to create an environmental friendly to the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, plant a diverse mix and deciduous and coniferous trees along with an array of different shrubs, such as Winterberry, High-bush Cranberry, Snowberry, Black Chokeberry, Hawthorn, Pussy Willow, and Silky Dogwood. The planting of emergent aquatic vegetation is also encouraged.