

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON

Columba leucocephala

Order: Columbiformes

Family: Columbidae

FNAI Ranks: G3/S3

U.S. Status: None

FL Status: Threatened

U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act and state

Wildlife Code prohibit take of birds, nests, or eggs.



Description: Similar in size and shape to the familiar rock dove (*Columba livia*), but the white-crowned pigeon's dark gray body and contrasting white crown set it apart. The crown and body are duller in color in adult females than in males. Juveniles lack a white crown.

Similar Species: Rock dove has variable color combinations, but typically are gray with whitish rump, dark tail band, and two black bars on each wing; not as uniformly colored as the white-crowned pigeon. Dark rock doves may be confused with juvenile white-crowned pigeons.

Habitat: Nests on mangrove islands and islets free from racoons and human disturbance. A fruit eater, this species

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forages in tropical hardwood hammocks on poisonwood and other native fruit-bearing trees.

Seasonal Occurrence: Breeds early May - early September. Most pigeons in Florida migrate south to the West Indies, although can be found fairly commonly and increasingly on the southern mainland and the Florida Keys during winter.

Florida Distribution: Nests from southern Biscayne Bay south through Florida Bay to the Marquesas Keys. Forages in the tropical forests of the Florida Keys and very southern mainland. Regularly ranges north along coasts to Collier and Palm Beach counties; less frequently to Lee and St. Lucie counties.

Range-wide Distribution: Breeding range includes Florida distribution south through the Bahamas, Greater Antilles, and Lesser Antilles south to Antigua. Small populations breed on islands off the Caribbean coast of Central America from Mexico to Nicaragua. Nonbreeding range extends south in the Lesser Antilles to St. Lucia and to western Panama.

Conservation Status: Most nesting sites are within federal parks or refuges, including Biscayne Bay National Park, Everglades National Park, and Great White Heron and Key West National Wildlife Refuges in the Lower Keys. Continued destruction of tropical hammocks, especially in the Keys, poses one of the greatest threats to the pigeon's food supply. The Florida Keys Ecosystem state acquisition project has acquired approximately 30 percent of the remaining tropical hammocks targeted.

Protection and Management: Continue and accelerate acquisition efforts in light of intense development pressure. Monitor the health of Florida Bay, and increase regulatory and educational programs designed to preserve and restore native tropical hardwoods.

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