

Crested Caracara Sighting Form

Please submit this form when you want to report a sighting of a Caracara in **Brevard County**.

LOCATION

Date: _____ Time: _____
Location: _____
Nearest landmark: _____

GPS LATITUDE

GPS LONGITUDE

BEHAVIOR

adult # ___ juvenile # ___ unknown # ___
 walking on ground foraging flying
 mating other _____
Direction traveling: N E S W leg ID band
 carrying nesting material carrying prey item

COMMENTS

Name

Address

Email

Phone

Natural Resources Management Office

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way

Building A, Suite 219

Viera, FL 32940

chris.koeppel@brevardcounty.us

Nest Site: The bulky nest of slender vines and sticks is usually constructed in a cabbage palm. The normal clutch is 2 or 3 eggs, with a range of from 1 to 4. The eggs are white to beige and heavily blotched with brown. The incubation period is about 32 to 33 days. The young remain in the nest for approximately 8 weeks. Sexual maturity is reached at 3 to 4 years of age.

Reasons for Current Protection. The primary cause for the decline of the crested caracara has been habitat loss. Real estate development, citrus groves, tree plantations, improved pastures, and other agricultural uses are all vying for the same habitat. Less significant factors may include illegal killing and trapping, increased numbers of road kills due to a rising volume of traffic, and slow recovery from population losses because of the caracara's low reproductive rate. Possible loss of genetic variability (due to the relatively small population), may make the caracara more vulnerable to stresses than would otherwise be the case.



Bird Sighting Information Needed. Wildlife observations are needed on the Crested Caracara in Brevard County. Please report any sightings by using the enclosed Sighting Form, or by contacting the Natural Resources Management Office at 321-633-2016.



Photographs courtesy of Chris Koeppel

Florida Crested Caracara



"To protect the quality of life and promote a sustainable future by managing and conserving the natural resources of Brevard County"

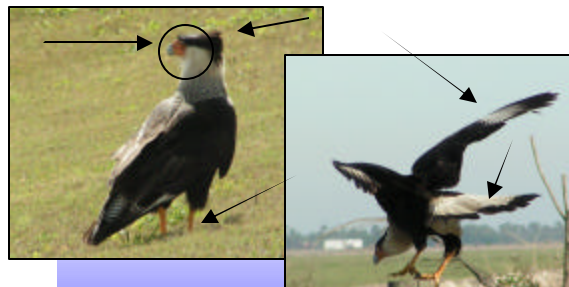
Florida Crested Caracara

(Caracara cheriway)

Description. The Crested Caracara has a length of 21 to 23 inches, and a broad wingspread of about 48 inches, which is about the size of an osprey with shorter wings. The Caracara has long, yellow legs and a large dark-bluish bill, with reddish-orange skin between the eyes and the bill. Adults have a white head and neck, with a black cap. The majority of its body and wings are black in adults and dark brown in young birds. The lower abdomen, and the underside of the tail are white, and sometimes yellow-tinged. The breast and upper back are whitish with black bars. The tail is white with narrow dark bars and a broad, dark band along the edge of the tail. Prominent white patches are visible near the tips of the wings in flight. Adult males and females look the same. Young birds are dark brown and less colorful than adults. Caracaras live in Brevard County year-round and do not migrate.



Juvenile Caracara



Useful identification points (adults shown)

Protection. This bird is protected as a Threatened (US Endangered Species Act) species both by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC), and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In addition, the Caracara is protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Current species guidelines delineate primary (985 feet) and secondary (6600 feet) protective zones around the nests, and prohibit harassing, taking, or killing any animal. It is unlawful to possess any Caracara (alive or dead) including parts, products, eggs, and offspring.

Feeding Habits. The Caracara is an opportunistic feeder; its diet includes both carrion and living prey. The living prey are turtles, turtle eggs, insects, fish, frogs, lizards, snakes, birds, and small mammals. Birds are often seen along Interstate 95, and associated roadways foraging for road kill or discarded food containers within their territory.

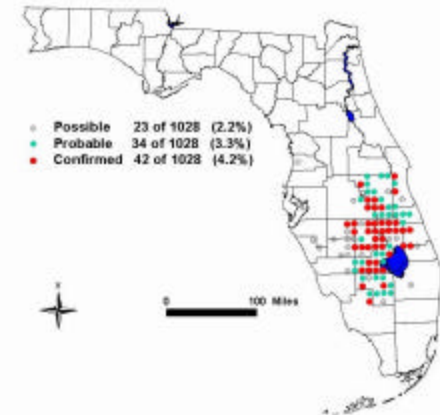


Habitat. Florida Crested Caracaras are found in open grassland or prairie. Most of this land is improved rangeland for agricultural or livestock grazing. Occupied habitat in Brevard County has been documented as a mix of scattered cabbage palms, occasional oak trees, and open grassland being utilized as cattle pasture or cabbage palm tree farming. Most habitat in Brevard County is located west of Interstate 95, and east of the St. Johns River.

Seasonal Occurrence. Locally, peak breeding and egg-laying season is from December to March, but eggs have been recorded from September through April. Mating has also been documented in Brevard County outside of the normal breeding season.

Status. Adult Caracaras are territorial, form persistent pair bonds, and exhibit strong site fidelity. Thus, the presence of adult individuals in an area can usually be assumed to indicate the existence of a breeding territory. It is estimated that there are about 400 adult birds residing in Florida.

Crested Caracara



Map courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OFFICE

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