

## Great Crested Flycatcher

*Myiarchus crinitus*

The Great Crested Flycatcher is the eastern Nearctic representative of the genus *Myiarchus*, which consists of 22 species distributed over much of North and South America (Traylor and Fitzpatrick 1982). Great Crested Flycatchers summer from southern Canada south to Texas, the Gulf Coast, and Florida; they winter from southern Florida to northwestern South America (AOU 1983).

The Great Crested Flycatcher inhabits mature, open, deciduous woodlands and edge. In Vermont, it prefers abandoned orchards, swamps, floodplain forests, the edges of woodlots and forests, and clear cuts and selectively cut woodlands.

Great Crested Flycatchers are most easily located on breeding territory by their persistent vocalizations. The common call is a loud, clear, whistled *wheep* often followed by a few raucous notes. These flycatchers can be heard calling for about two months; the species falls largely silent by mid July. Although it is a large songbird, the crested flycatcher is inconspicuous when silent. It spends much less time foraging from exposed perches than most other large flycatchers, preferring to forage within the canopy. This unobtrusiveness resulted in confirmation in only 33% of the priority blocks. The Great Crested Flycatcher is a cavity nester. Careful observation of the adults will usually reveal the nest's location, since it is rarely hidden behind branches or foliage. In about 44% of all breeding confirmations for Vermont the nest was detected. Adults with food for young accounted for 22% of confirmed breedings, and recently fledged young led to another 21% of confirmations.

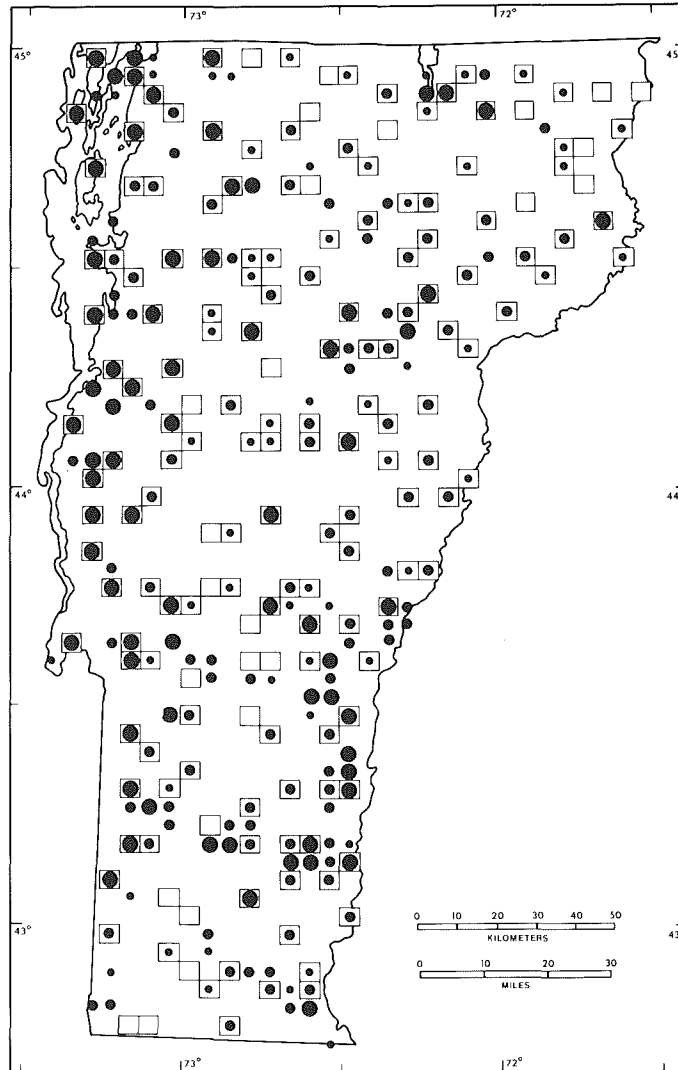
Great Crested Flycatchers arrive in Vermont during the first or second week of May; May 1 is an early date. Nesting commences in late May. Nest building has been recorded in Vermont as early as May 24. The nest is located in a natural cavity, in a hole excavated by a woodpecker, or in a nest



box. Deep cavities are filled with any available material to the desired depth from the entrance. The nest is hollowed out from this mass of material, which may include leaf litter, twigs, stems, rootlets, hair, feathers, grass, man-made objects, and, often, a snake skin. Nest heights vary with the height of available cavities; the average height of 11 Vermont nests was 4.8 m (16 ft).

The 4 to 7 eggs are buff, streaked with purple. The average size of seven Vermont clutches was 4.7 eggs. Dates for these sets ranged from June 2 to June 20. The incubation period lasts from 13 to 15 days (Bent 1942). Only four reported nestling dates exist for Vermont, ranging from June 18 to July 1. The nestling period lasts about 14 to 15 days (Harrison 1978). Dependent young have been encountered in Vermont as early as June 24, but no satisfactory late fledgling date exists for the state. The autumn migration of this species in Vermont peaks in early to mid August; a few Great Cresteds are seen each year during September.

The Great Crested Flycatcher is widespread in the Green Mountain State and was recorded in 85% of the 179 priority blocks. However, the Great Crested Flycatcher prefers a warm, temperate climate and is near the northern extreme of its range in Vermont. It was recorded in just 63% of the priority blocks in the Northeast Highlands and 70% of the priority blocks



**No. of priority blocks in which recorded**

TOTAL 153 (85%)

Possible breeding: 41 (27% of total)

Probable breeding: 62 (40% of total)

Confirmed breeding: 50 (33% of total)

**Physiographic regions in which recorded**

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	30	97	19.6
Green Mountains	38	70	24.8
North Central	18	95	11.8
Northeast Highlands	10	63	6.5
East Central	18	95	11.8
Taconic Mountains	15	94	9.8
Eastern Foothills	24	100	15.7

in the Green Mountains, indicating lower populations in the cooler, often conifer-dominated woodlands of these regions. Although it is widespread, the Great Crested Flycatcher does not occur in large numbers anywhere in the state. The species requires large territories—1.6–3.2 ha (4–8 a) in Maryland (Stewart and Robbins 1958). From 1966 to 1979, the species averaged between 1 and 2.5 per route on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Breeding Bird surveys (BBS 1966–79).

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