



How to Help

Great Crested Flycatchers

This relatively common bird of eastern North America has benefited from the fragmentation of deciduous forest and the subsequent increase in small woodlots and woodland edges. It is a summer resident throughout the southern Canadian provinces and all states east of the Great Plains. It needs large trees, where it nests in cavities and hunts for flying insects. You can help Great Crested Flycatchers by providing tall trees and nest boxes.

What Great Crested Flycatchers Need

Food: This flycatcher hunts for insects, capturing them in the air by flying out from a high perch in a tree, and foraging in a territory of 3 to 6 acres around its nest site. While butterflies and moths, beetles, grasshoppers and crickets, bugs, bees and wasps, and smaller percentages of various flies, other insects, and spiders make up most of its diet, small wild fruits account for about 6 percent.

Nesting: Nests are sited in open forests or woodlands, including suburban yards and parks with numerous large deciduous trees. They are built in woodpecker holes, other natural cavities, or nest boxes, usually 10 to 70 feet high in a large tree.

Shelter: This flycatcher's roosting and sleeping behavior is almost unknown, but it probably roosts on high sheltered branches of tall trees.

Other: European Starlings compete for nesting sites in cavities or nest boxes.

How You Can Help

- Plant native shade trees that will eventually provide high perches from which flycatchers can hunt.
- Plant native shrubs and bushes that will provide habitat for insects preyed upon by flycatchers.
- Avoid applying pesticides that can kill insects that flycatchers eat and harm the birds.
- Maintain woodlands or yards with large shade trees. If safety allows, do not remove snags or dead branches, especially those already excavated by woodpeckers.
- Mount a nest box 10 to 20 feet up in a large shade tree. The inside of the box should measure at least 6 x 6 inches wide and 8 to 10 inches deep, with a 1 9/16 inch entrance hole. Site so the entrance hole is unobstructed by nearby branches or leaves. Cover the bottom of box with two inches of wood chips.
- Maintain large shade trees that can provide roosting sites for flycatchers.
- Use a 1 9/16 inch entrance hole in nest boxes to make it harder for starlings to enter. If starlings are able to enter the box, remove their nests before they can produce young.
- Flycatchers may prefer nest boxes hung securely from a large branch rather than fastened to a tree trunk, while starlings avoid hanging or swinging boxes.