

Breeding Biology of Florida's Shorebirds and Seabirds

Breeding season initiation and information for shorebird and seabird species nesting in Florida. Values are based on data within the Florida Shorebird Database (FSD) and available peer-reviewed literature. Some variability can occur due to local factors.

Species	Breeding Behavior Begins	Clutch Size: Most Common # Eggs (Range)	Incubation (Days)	Days to Fledging
American oystercatcher	Early March	3 (1–4)	24–28	34–55
Black-necked stilt	Early April	4 (2–5)	21–30	27–31
Black skimmer	Late April	4 (2–5)	21–25	28–30
Bridled tern	Mid-April	1 (1)	28–30	55–63
Brown noddy	Late February	1 (1)	30–40	45–50
Brown pelican	Mid-January	3 (2–4)	29–35	61–84
Caspian tern	Early April	2 (2–3)	25–28	35–45
Eastern willet	Mid-March	4 (4)	22–29	30
Gull-billed tern	Mid-April	3 (1–4)	22–23	28–35
Killdeer	Mid-March	4 (3–5)	22–28	29–34
Laughing gull	Early March	3 (2–3)	22–25	35–50
Least tern	Late March	2 (1–4)	19–25	19–21
Magnificent frigatebird	Late January	1 (1)	53–61	150–185
Masked booby	January	2 (1–2)	40–49	109–151
Roseate tern	Mid-May	2 (1–4)	21–26	25–30
Royal tern	Late March	1 (1–2)	28–35	28–35
Sandwich tern	Late April	1 (1–2)	21–29	27–29
Snowy plover	Early February	3 (1–3)	24–32	28–42
Sooty tern	Late January	1 (1–2)	26–33	54–63
Wilson's plover	Mid-March	3 (2–3)	23–29	30–35

Breeding behaviors can include pair formation, defending a territory/area, and scraping nest bowls. Clutch size, incubation period, and time to fledging can all be influenced by external factors. Variability in site-specific characteristics such as resource availability, presence of predators, and disturbance can influence these metrics, as can environmental conditions such as ambient temperatures and weather events. For example, birds usually lay more eggs in their first nest of the season, and re-nesting attempts will often have fewer eggs.

This resource is a synthesis of available literature and data from the FSD as of the 2024 breeding season. This document will be updated as new information becomes available. All data in the FSD are collected using the [Breeding Bird Protocol for Florida's Shorebirds and Seabirds](#). If you have questions, please contact FLShorebirdDatabase@MyFWC.com.