



Figure 1: Brown-crested Flycatcher (John Hoffman)

Brown-crested Flycatcher

(*Myiarchus tyrannulus*)

This flycatcher tends to spend warm summer months in areas of the Southwest and northern Mexico. Its migration is not well understood, but there are records of spring arrival and fall departure dates in Mexico and the US.

A member of the family *Myiarchus*, the Brown-crested Flycatcher can be difficult to distinguish from other members of the same family, such as the Ash-throated Flycatcher and Dusky-capped Flycatcher. They have an olive brown color on the head and back, with a significant crest and a large, heavy bill, which helps distinguish it from the Ash-throated Flycatcher. The throat and

breast are a pale gray, and the belly and undertail coverts are yellow, paler than those of the Ash-throated Flycatcher. They have two dull wingbars and rufous (reddish brown) remiges (primary and secondary flight feathers). The inner webs of their tail feathers are also a rufous color, which extends to the tip—another difference between them and the Ash-throated Flycatcher. They can also be distinguished by call.

HABITAT The Brown-crested Flycatcher is most commonly seen in giant-cactus and riparian communities, and less commonly in pine-oak woodlands and desert-mesquite areas. They are less widespread in dry desert habitats than their cousin, the Ash-throated Flycatcher, and depend more on larger trees for nesting. Brown-crested Flycatchers are more likely than Ash-throated Flycatchers to nest suburbs in southern Arizona cities. They typically build nests in woodpecker holes, and also commonly use other natural cavities, such as in saguaros and dead or dying limbs of sycamore, cottonwood, and willow trees. They have also been seen nesting in artificial cavities, such as holes in fence posts, tin cans placed in trees or nest boxes.

FOOD PREFERENCES During breeding season the main food source is arthropods (insects, spiders and others). These are usually caught in low foliage, on the ground or on short flights between perches rather than on the wing in open areas. Sometimes they also eat fruit, and rarely small reptiles and mammals.

Nest Box Specs

HOLE	2" diameter
DEPTH	9"
FLOOR	6" x 6"
OTHER	side-opening for easy monitoring

NESTING FACTS They lay eggs from late March to late July with peak activity in May and early June. Most nests have 4 or 5 eggs but as many as 7 and as few as 2 have been reported. Eggs are slightly glossy, cream or buff colored with thin or thick streaks or blotches usually brown or purple.

BOXES AND BOX MOUNTING Brown-crested Flycatchers are relatively elusive in our local nest-box community, but have been seen nesting in a suburban nest box. The Tucson Audubon Flycatcher box is the ideal size for this species. Boxes larger than those we promote may not exclude European Starling. Our box will not exclude House Sparrows so when you put up this box you should be vigilant and evict them as well as starlings.

Boxes should be placed between 5 and 30 feet high, facing any direction. Boxes mounted in mesquite trees or in the vicinity of other shade sources should help to keep nest temperatures from rising too high. They may be mounted on dead or live trees, or poles or posts.

If your box gets infested with House Sparrows or goes unused, experiment with moving it to a different location to see if this helps. However, beware that it may not be used in its new location until the following spring.

