The Northern Mockingbird is Florida’s State Bird

Did you know that the mocking bird is Florida’s state bird? In a 1927 legislative session by way of Senate Concurrent Resolution Number 3, the mocking bird was deemed the representative bird for Florida.

Mockingbirds are known for their ability to imitate sounds that they hear. In fact, in addition to their uncanny ability to replicate the songs of other birds, they can make sounds similar to a cat’s meow, a dog’s bark, a frog’s chirping and even a human’s vocals. It has been said that they can even mimic some mechanical noises such as a fence gate squeaking. Throughout their life, they continue to acquire new sounds. They are avid singers and may continue well into the night with their varying sounds.

Mockingbirds are not as colorful as many other songbirds. They are generally gray on their backs and upper body with white underneath. Usually they grow to be about ten inches long and can have a fairly large wingspan of about 15 inches.

Besides their mimicking abilities, mocking birds are known for their aggressive behavior. These birds are extremely territorial and their belligerent conduct is usually because they are protecting their nests. Both the female and male construct the nest of twigs, roots, grass and other items they can find. The couple will usually begin to fabricate the nests in February or March. The area of choice is in a shrub or short tree. The mother bird can lay anywhere from three to six eggs and sometimes uses more than one nest. The eggs are usually a light bluish green with lots of brown spots.

Mockingbirds will generally raise more than one batch of babies each year. In fact, they can lay as many as three times annually. While the mother bird is incubating the new eggs, the father will take care of the new fledglings that hatched previously.

Mockingbirds have been known to mate for life and are usually monogamous. Both parents share in the rearing of young. As with other species of birds, the female incubates the eggs while the male hunts for food and keeps predators at bay.

Mockingbirds dine on both meat and vegetation. They are omnivorous and consume bugs, bees, worms, lizards, butterflies, fruits and seeds. This quality makes the bird useful to humans by keeping the creepy-crawly bugs to a minimum. They also help to propagate many varieties of fruits by consuming them and spreading the seeds to other areas.

Fortunately, mockingbirds easily adapt to urban situations. In fact, they can often be seen on a freshly mowed lawn seeking insects and worms. Since they are not particularly shy and timid, these birds tend to thrive in areas where other species may not. Mockingbirds have even been known to attack humans and chase them around in an effort to protect nests and territory.

If you would like to attract these amazing birds to your yard, place a feeder with fruit, suet or mealworms where you can have a good view of it. But be aware that these feisty birds may chase other birds and critters away.