Eastern Meadowlark  
*Sturnella magna*

The Eastern Meadowlark is a common resident throughout most of mainland Florida. Its breeding range extends from Maine west through southern Canada to eastern Minnesota and central Arizona and south through Central America to northeast Brazil (Lanyon 1995). In winter individuals retreat from the northern portion of the range. The bright yellow breast with a black "V" flashes from fenceposts, snags, and power lines, as the birds sing their sweet whistling song.

**Habitat.** The Eastern Meadowlark occurs in grassy fields, pastures, cultivated areas, groves, open pine woods, and prairies. In towns it is more secretive but can usually be found if any moderately sized area of suitable habitat remains.

Food consists primarily of insects, which comprise more than 75% of the diet, with grains and the seeds of weeds making up the remainder.

The nest of the Eastern Meadowlark is placed on the ground and hidden very well in thick grass. The nest has an arched "roof" and consists mostly of very fine grasses. Three to 5 eggs are laid in each clutch. The white eggs are smooth with a moderate gloss and are spotted and splotched over their entire surface with brown and lavender. The female incubates the eggs for 13 to 15 days, and the young fledge at 11 or 12 days of age.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** Some females raise 2 broods in a season, which occurs from late March through July (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

**Status.** Eastern Meadowlarks are absent from tree farm areas in north Florida, which do not provide suitable breeding habitat for this species except during the first few seasons of growth. It is also absent from the mangrove forests of the southwestern coast and the Florida Keys but was found at Flamingo on Cape Sable, th southernmost tip of mainland Florida where grassy areas exist. It is most common in the open pastures and prairies of the Florida peninsula.

R. David Goodwin

Sponsored by Barbara P. Muschlitz
Eastern Meadowlark

- Possible: 180 of 1028 (17.5%)
- Probable: 168 of 1028 (16.3%)
- Confirmed: 436 of 1028 (42.4%)

[Map showing distribution of Eastern Meadowlarks in Florida]