

# Indian Peafowl - *Pavo cristatus*



**AKA:** Common peafowl, blue peafowl, Indian peacock

**Male:** peacock - full adult plumage is not attained until 3-5 years old

**Female:** peahen

**Related species:** Guinea fowl and pheasant species

**Native:** India and Sri Lanka

**First seen in FL:** 1950's, probably as introduced or escaped ornamental birds

**Established status:** Firmly established with widespread breeding from free-living, semi-domestic or feral populations

**Estimated Florida range:** From large pockets in central and northern Florida, their range has now extended much further

south; an increasing population is now found south of Miami and into the upper Keys.

**Urban habitats:** Along the edges of cities and within agricultural areas, large estates, suburban gardens, arboreta, and large grass-covered common areas

**Food habits:** Omnivorous and opportunistic. Highly-destructive to cereal and peanut crops, and garden flowering plants. Generally will feed on seeds, grain, berries, tender young shoots of crops, flowers and flower buds, fruits, snails, insects, lizards, and frogs. Does also eat termites!

**Threats to native species:** Unknown impact on native species; however, they will eat lizards and frogs.

**Predators and hazards:** Raccoons, gray foxes, coyotes, dogs and cars

**Roost and nest sites:** Nests are constructed on the ground under thick cover. Roosting sites tend to be in larger trees – pines may be favored.

**Clutch size and incubation period:** typically 4 – 8, but as many as 10 eggs laid and incubated about 28 days.

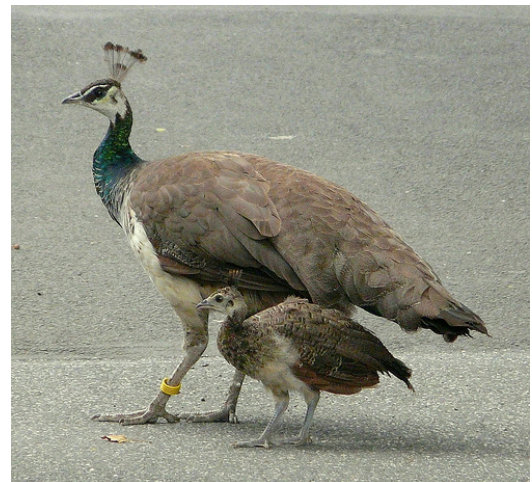
**Condition at hatch:** Precocial, covered in downy feathers, able to forage and eat on their own and capable of leaving the nest two hours after hatching. They do, however, require the hen to protect and keep them warm and safe.

**Dependency period:** May stay with mother for nine months.

**Range:** They tend to roam in spring and summer until they have found a suitable home range. Then, they may remain resident in that area. Males will defend a territory in the breeding season. Single males may roam all year long.



[Left] Peafowl chick



[Right] Peahen with fledgling

Human interactions with this species can be both positive and negative. Some enjoy these spectacular birds while others may find their presence to be a nuisance. The following section presents issues that might arise and the humane responses that effectively resolve issues when they do. The most important element in preventing conflicts with peafowl, as it is for every species of wildlife, is: **Don't feed them!** This is the first step in reducing the chance they will establish a residence. However, there is no guarantee that your neighbors will follow this recommendation and, regardless of any human-provided food, the peafowl may find a suitable roosting site locally. Peafowl tend to remain in a localized area and can form a strong attachment to a roosting or feeding site; steps to reduce the attractiveness and suitability of the areas are outlined below.

**Humane hazing techniques:**

- 1) A motion-sensitive water sprinkler system set to spray the area if any motion is detected
- 2) Loud noises: air horns, whistles, banging pots and pans together
- 3) Advancing on the birds waving a white towel to help make you look big and scary
- 4) Walking outside with your dog on a leash and allowing your pet to bark at them
- 5) Using your leaf blower to make noise and odd wind movements
- 6) Turning you garden hose on the birds to annoy and encourage them to move



**You have found a peafowl chick:** If they are lost or the female is dead, they need to be caught and may need to be brought into care. A lost peafowl chick or chicks will call in high-pitched peeps, and most obviously, be alone. Peahens with broods may adopt chicks of other broods; however, you will need to supervise and intervene if this process is not successful. Begin this process by distracting the peahen with food such as bird seed or cat kibble. Release the orphan once she is eating, then observe her behavior over the next several hours to ensure she accepts the new kid in her brood.

**They are roosting in your trees or on the roof:** They may be moved along by using the humane hazing strategies listed above. You can also try using the noise-maker approach. These methods take A LOT of repetition, because often times once they are scared off, they come back 10 minutes later. Don't be discouraged after one day; if done consistently, you should see fewer and fewer peafowl as time goes on.

**They are pecking at your car/windows:** During the breeding season, male peafowl see any intruding males as competition. The reflection on your car or windows is perceived as a strange male in their territory. This male must be evicted, hence the attacks on these shiny reflective surfaces. You can reduce the issues by covering your car. Or for windows, set the sprinkler to go off if the peacock approaches the area. You can also try spraying him with your garden hose. If he is very persistent, you could also try covering the windows, or even spray them with a mixture of water and dish detergent to reduce the reflection.

**They are so noisy:** The main periods of calling are dawn and dusk while in the roosting areas; however, their calls may be heard all day. Reducing foraging opportunities and hazing as noted above will help keep them out of your immediate area. Using a motion-sensitive water sprinkler system at the roost sites may encourage them to move to a safer area. Just keep in mind these sounds are made for a number of reasons. For instance, calling in the morning and evening helps keep the family together, they are a "Goodnight John-Boy, goodnight Dad" type of thing. During the day, males call to advertise their presence and availability - essentially, they are looking for love!

**I can't stand the feces in my pool/porch/garden:** If you need to remove the mess, try using gardening gloves or other protection to pick up and dispose of feces, or simply hose it away. White vinegar will help remove any stuck-on feces, and dissolve any white urates. Then, use the above hazing suggestions to reduce the number of peafowl in the area.

**A humane (and legal) note:** Peafowl are considered domestic animals, and the responsibility of the property owner. They cannot be subjected to any action deemed cruel. They may not be wounded or have any pain inflicted on them. That means you cannot shoot them, injure them or in any way use inhumane methods to remove them.

**If you need further assistance, call South Florida Wildlife Center at 954-524-4302 BEFORE you act!**