

**INLAND BREEDING OF GRAY KINGBIRDS
(*Tyrannus dominicensis*) IN HENDRY COUNTY, FLORIDA**

BILL PRANTY¹ AND VALERI PONZO²

¹8515 Village Mill Row, Bayonet Point, Florida 34667

E-mail: billpranty@hotmail.com

²725 Center Road, Sarasota, Florida 34240

E-mail: anibirdbrain@gmail.com

At 1355 hours on 9 June 2017, while en route to Palm Beach County, Florida, to observe a Tropical Mockingbird (*Mimus gilvus*), we stopped at the Walmart (1005 West Sugarland Highway) in Clewiston, Hendry County, to see what birds were present. In the front parking lot, we noticed a Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) perched at the top of a live oak (*Quercus virginianus*). We quickly discovered its nest (Fig. 1), which was built in the same oak on a horizontal branch about 3.6 m above the ground. The nest was a large, bulky structure constructed of twigs and containing several long strands of plastic twine. Within a few minutes, a second Gray Kingbird flew to the nest carrying food. It perched on the nest cup and appeared to feed nestlings, which were not visible from the ground. The habitat of this nest is very similar to Gray Kingbird nests found in southwestern Florida, where kingbird nests are often built in young oaks that have been planted in parking lots (J. A. Jackson in litt.). Lighting associated with these parking lots attracts insects and may also allow the birds to forage for longer periods relative to nests built in less-lighted sites (J. A. Jackson in litt.). After watching the kingbirds for several minutes, we departed.

Our observation represents the northernmost verifiable (i.e., photographic or specimen) record of Gray Kingbirds breeding inland in Florida (Stevenson and Anderson 1994, Smith and Jackson 2002, Greenlaw et al. 2014). This observation builds on a growing body of evidence, mostly unpublished in the ornithological literature, that breeding around Lake Okeechobee has been occurring for several years and may now be a regular event. For instance, BP and others observed five Gray Kingbirds, presumed to be a family group, at Okee-Tantie Campground along the northwestern shore of Lake Okeechobee, Okeechobee County, on 27 July 2007, and two kingbirds were observed there on 19 August 2007 (Gray et al. 2009). The Gray Kingbird range map in eBird (ebird.org) contains numerous observations, including many supported by photographs, of one or more kingbirds around Lake Okeechobee during May–July. The most significant eBird observation, by James Petersen, is of a pair of Gray Kingbirds photographed near their nest at Lake Okeechobee Levee Park near Clewiston on 18 May 2017 (Petersen 2017). The Levee Park nest, which was also built in an oak, was built about 2.8 km east of the Walmart nest that we found, and may have been active concurrently.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Jerome A. Jackson and an anonymous reviewer for improving drafts of this paper.



Figure 1. Adult Gray Kingbird at its nest at Clewiston, Hendry County, Florida, on 9 June 2017. The nest was built in a live oak planted in a Walmart parking lot. Note the several strands of plastic twine built into and hanging below the left side of the nest. This nest represents the northernmost inland record of Gray Kingbirds breeding in Florida. Other recent observations, including two detailed in this paper, suggest that Gray Kingbirds may now be breeding regularly around Lake Okeechobee. Photograph by Bill Pranty.

LITERATURE CITED

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