

A Second Locality Nesting Record of the  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Mississippi

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On 10 June 1977 while driving west on highway 80 and approaching Lawrence, Newton County, Mississippi, I saw a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (Muscivora forficata) perched on a service wire to a roadside residence. I turned around and returned to the residence driveway, but the bird had flown and alighted on a beanpole in a nearby garden. It flew again and climbed to at least 60 meters, caught an insect and went directly to a large loblolly pine (Pinus taeda) growing alongside the highway right-of-way. I drove back down the highway and into a parking area by some butane storage tanks near the pine. The flycatcher was found sitting on a nest atop a horizontal branch of the pine tree extending out over the highway and about 10 meters from the ground. The bird remained on the nest until I left about 30 minutes later.

On 11 June I returned to the nest site with my wife and granddaughter and the Scissor-tail was perched on a dead limb of a nearby small persimmon tree (Diospyros virginiana). An Eastern Kingbird (Tyrannus tyrannus) was perched in the same tree. The Scissor-tail made several flights to nearby trees, each time returning to the nest tree and at one time remaining on the nest for 10 minutes. It called softly each time while alighting in the nest tree. We observed the bird's movements for more than an hour. Jarvis Parker, a State Conservation Officer, stopped and also observed the bird on the nest. While he was there a pair of Eastern Kingbirds returned to the nest tree and one flew to its nest atop some pine cones on a higher branch than the Scissor-tail nest and near the top of the same tree. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher left the nest just as we decided to leave and it flew high and out of sight in an easterly direction. Later in the morning the Scissor-tail was observed by Christine Berry, Frances Wills, and Ruth Downey.

No more than one Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen at this location and the sex could not be determined. The nest was a bulky structure composed of weed stems, including those of cudweed or rabbit tobacco (Gnaphalium sp.) which often are used by Mockingbirds (Mimus polyglottos) in constructing their nests. The nest contents could not be examined because of its height and location over the highway.

John Phares and I returned to the nest site the afternoon of 21 June and we saw no Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. This is the second locality nesting record for Mississippi. Jerome A. Jackson, Robert Howell, and David F. Werschkul described what they believed to be the first breeding record of this species east of the Mississippi River (American Birds 29:912, 1975), a nest containing a dead nestling, three recently-fledged young and two adults at the same site on 5 and 6 July, 1975 located in a pasture at the southern city limits of Tupelo, Lee County, Mississippi.