

Recent Records of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Mississippi

Jerome A. Jackson and David F. Werschkul
Department of Zoology, Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*; Fig. 1) is generally thought of as a bird of the southern Great Plains, but it is known for turning up in odd places at odd times (Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 179, 1942). Early records of this species in Mississippi were summarized by Turcotte (Mississippi Kite 2(2):32, 1972). Apparently the species has been known from the state only since 1952. A number of additional sightings, including three breeding records for Mississippi, can be added to Turcotte's summary. These records are as follows:

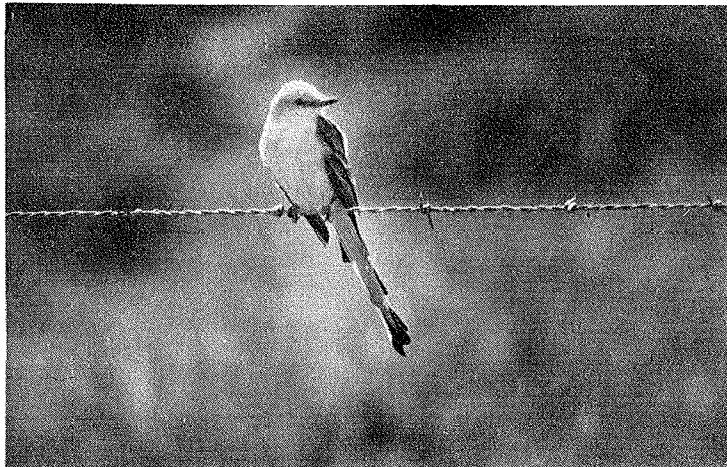


Figure 1. An adult male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.
Photograph by J. A. Jackson

1. On 6 October 1971, Jacob Miller observed and photographed three Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at Belle Fontaine Beach in Jackson County (M.O.S. Newsletter 16(4):3, 1971).
2. On 24 October 1972, H. Champ Clark collected a specimen for the State Wildlife Museum in Amite County.
3. On 14 April 1973, Carroll Perkins photographed a Scissor-tail at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Noxubee County (Oktibbeha Audubon Newsletter 4(5):2, 1973).

4. In early July 1974, George Switzer saw a Scissor-tail near Flora in Yazoo County. (Letter on file at Mississippi State University.)

5. On 5 July 1975, Robert Howell, David Werschkul, and Jerome Jackson found the nest, adults, and 3 recently fledged young Scissor-tailed Flycatchers just south of Tupelo in Lee County (Jackson et al., *American Birds* 29:912, 1975). Mrs. W. T. Watson had previously located the nest 2.5 m up in a 4 m sweetgum (*Liquidamber styraciflua*). The nest tree was standing in about 0.5 m of water about 15 m from the southeast corner of a 2 ha pond. The nest and the skeleton of a dead nestling that was in the nest are in the ornithological collection at Mississippi State University. Mrs. Watson reported that the Scissor-tails were last seen in the area on about 1 August 1975.

6. In mid-July 1975, William S. Parker saw a Scissor-tail about 8 km west of Columbus in Lowndes County (Letter on file at Mississippi State University.)

7. On 17 April 1976 a pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers returned to the Watson farm near Tupelo. They nested in the same nest tree as in 1975 and were successful in fledging 4 young during the last week of June (W. T. Watson, pers. comm.).

8. On 14 March 1977, Donald M. Bradburn observed a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on Horn Island.

9. In early April 1977 a single male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher returned to the Watson farm near Tupelo. It centered its activities around the tree that had been used as a nest site in 1975 and 1976. This lone bird remained in the area until the first week in July - "defending" a territory without opposition and without success in finding a mate.

10. On 10 June 1977 William H. Turcotte discovered a pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers nesting near Lawrence in Newton County. (See article in this issue of the Mississippi Kite.)

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has been expanding its range eastward in recent years (Lowery, *Louisiana Birds*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1974:425-426). East of the Mississippi River, in addition to Mississippi, it has also been reported nesting in southwestern Indiana (Howell and Theroff, *Auk* 93:644-645, 1976). With at least two successful nests of the species recorded from Mississippi, it looks like the Scissor-tail may become a regular member of our avifauna.