

RECENT SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER RECORDS FROM OHIO

Two Scissor-tailed flycatchers in one year might appropriately be called an invasion in Ohio where there are only four prior records. The most recent record was a specimen collected in Adams County, June 16, 1970.

Here are the reports (adapted by the editors from their documentations) of the two observers who in the last year were there when the bird was.

Wayne County, August 16, 1987

Clayton Hofstetter

While driving on Zuercher Road in Sugar Creek Township about 8:00 AM I saw a bird sitting on a power line along the road with a tail which was considerably longer than its main body. Fortunately the bird allowed me to pull the car within about 15-20 yards. I had never seen a Scissor-tailed flycatcher before but the bird's appearance left no doubt. As I studied the bird with my binoculars I could see that the wings of the bird were mainly black, the back was grayish and the breast was creamy-gray with a pink wash. This was too good to enjoy for myself, so I left to call Frances and Brian Gerber, my sister and nephew, who are both experienced birders. They arrived about ten minutes later. They remarked about the red along the edge of the breast where it meets the wing. But the most remarkable feature was the bird's tail. It was almost twice the length of its body and forked visibly in flight. It was black with white edgings. The bird uttered no sound and flew once several hundred feet again landing on the power line along with some Mourning doves. We spent about an hour with the bird. The weather was perfect with a clear, sunny sky.

I have often travelled thirty to fifty miles to sight rare birds, but this sighting was unique in that this beautiful bird came within one-half mile of home.

Lucas County, May 24, 1988

Kirk Alexander

John Pogacnik called me and said he had found a Scissor-tailed flycatcher about 10:00 AM at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. I quickly made the appropriate excuses and left Columbus as soon as I could. This would be a new bird for me if I could find it. By 4:00 PM I was walking the outermost dike of Magee which separates the marsh from Lake Erie. This dike runs east and west from the northern most point of the causeway road towards Turtle Creek. I was walking east on the dike and was approaching some tall cottonwoods on the beach when suddenly I saw a flycatcher about the body size of an Olive-sided but with extremely long tail streamers sitting on the tops of cattails and small willows directly south of the dike. There was my bird, 100 miles and six hours later. The bird allowed me to approach as close as 80-100 feet and with the sun at my back I was able to study the bird for twenty minutes with my binoculars and 40x scope.

The head, nape and back of the bird was a pearly gray. The throat and breast were whitish. The wings, rump and tail were black. The outer tail feathers were white. The flanks, sides and under tail coverts were a salmon pink. The bird occasionally flew after insects and once a swallow returning each time to its perch atop the willows or cattails. When it flew I could see that the underwing linings were also salmon colored. The bird's lores, feet, and bill were black. The salmon underparts and pale gray head separated this species from the Fork-tailed flycatcher.

I might add that a Mississippi kite was present at Magee at the same time. The occurrence of these two southern/western species together seems significant. Later at home while still reminiscing about this spectacular bird I checked some recent southern Ontario records of this species. I found four recent reports: 5/7/82 NW Hillman Marsh and later departing south from tip of Point Pelee; 5/25/83 north end of loop woods at Point Pelee; 5/19/84 sparrow field at Point Pelee; 6/5/85 tip of Long Point. The "work" of one bird (including Magee) - I wonder.

