





















DO NOT LIE ON BEING





545-61-2000

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER

Safe Harbor Dam, Lancaster Co.

12/30/00

I went to Safe Harbor Dam to look for the Ash-throated Flycatcher that had been found there about 3-4 days earlier. The bird was quickly located flying up against the walls of the building attempting to get food from spider webs and cocoons that were stuck against the wall.

General appearance: The bird was easily identified as one of the *myiarchus* type flycatchers - big headed, long-tailed with a yellow belly thinner and smaller proportioned than a Great-crested Flycatcher.

Upperparts: The head was brown, large in shape and peaked towards the back of the crown. The nape was gray-brown. The mantle was brown. The primaries were dark-brown at the distal third. The rest of the primaries, or primary panel was rusty-brown. The tertials were brown with a very visible pale white outer edging with the innermost tertial having a broader white edge than the others. The secondaries were brown with pale white outer edges. The greater coverts were the same brown color with pale white edges. The median coverts were pale white forming a wing bar. The dorsal surface of the tail was brown and there appeared to be a very pale outer edge to the feathers visible only under direct light. The upper tail coverts were brown.

Underparts: The throat was gray. The upper breast was pale white. The lower breast and belly was pale lemon yellow. The flanks appeared pale white. The undertail coverts appeared pale brown. I had only a brief look at the underside of the tail. In reflected light, it appeared rusty brown in the center and darker on the outer edges. In the brief look, I could not really appreciate the dark outer edge "hooking" around the base of the feather.

Bare parts: Eye was dark. The bill was black and I would suggest that it was medium in length and width. The legs were black.

Behavior: The bird would sit for periods of time either on a railing or small tree along the dam walkway actively looking about turning its head back and forth and tilting it side to side. It would then either fly up to the sunlit walls of the dam or fly down to the cement walkway and then return once again to a perch.

Voice: On several occasions I heard the bird give a soft single "wheet" or "whit"

Separation from similar species:

Great-crested Flycatcher- Great-crested Flycatcher is larger and heavier bodied than Ash-throated. The bill is also larger and wider. The head would be darker and the face, throat and upper breast are dark gray. The lower breast and belly are bright yellow and the yellow extends to the undertail coverts. The back color is olive as opposed to brown. The tail on GCFL has extensive rufous color. The innermost tertial is supposed to show a large white outer margin that should be quite evident. This outer margin occupies at least half the size of the feather. This

particular bird has a white portion to the outer web of the innermost tertial, but I would estimate that it occupied about 10% of the width of the feather. The outer margin of this feather did not seem particularly bold or obvious. GCFL also has a different type of call note.

Brown-crested Flycatcher - I am unfamiliar with any records of this species in the northeast, but, since it occurs along the Gulf states in winter it should be considered as a potential vagrant to PA. BCFL's I have seen in TX and AZ have a larger broader bill and appear more yellow than this bird. The yellow is not as bright as a GCFL but again it is brighter than an ATFL. BCFL in general larger, stouter, darker gray and have a more yellow breast.

I have seen the race *cooperi* in south TX. It is a bit smaller than the western race *magister* but still appears slightly larger than ATFL. The underparts of *cooperi* also has the uninterrupted gray throat/upperbreast and yellow lower breast/belly appearance. ATFL has the gray and yellow interrupted by an area of white in the upper breast. The tails of the two species can be similar but BCFL has a broader brown outer edge than ATFL.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher - Once again I know of no records for this species in the northeast, but, it still needs to be eliminated. All the DCFL I have seen struck me as phoebe size. I quickly eliminated this species as a candidate by size even though its general underpart coloration can resemble ATFL. DCFL also has no rufous in the tail.

Two species that I have no field experience with are Nutting's Flycatcher of the Mexico and extreme southwest USA and La Sagra's Flycatcher of the Caribbean and rarely to FL. Although both species are remote candidates to stray to the northeast, I think they should be eliminated for the sake of completeness.

Nutting's Flycatcher - Supposedly Nutting's is very similar to ATFL and best separated by voice and mouth color. This species is also supposed to be more BCFL like in plumage of the underparts, lacking the intervening whitish area of the ATFL. Photographs I have seen of Nutting's in FN 52:148 and cover show the primary panels as having less rufous and paler than ATFL. In all other respects it appears to be similar to ATFL.

La Sagra's Flycatcher - Supposedly this species is the palest of all the myiarchus with little or no rufous in the tail. There is also supposed to be little or no yellow to the underparts.

My conclusion is that all other myiarchus type flycatchers can be eliminated by the combination of size, plumage characteristics and call note except for Nutting's. Even though Nutting's cannot be 100% eliminated I think that identification of Ash-throated can be made. First just by geography and occurrence I think Nutting's can be eliminated. I am not a big fan of identifying birds by geography but Nutting's is resident in Pacific Mexico and south into Central America and I think there are only two accepted records for the USA. Saying this, I know there are records for Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and Vermilion Flycatcher in the northeast and I personally went to see the Variegated Flycatcher in Toronto a few years ago. Second, ATFL has a well established pattern of late fall appearances in the northeast. ATFL are reported annually from at least one or more of our neighboring states from mid-November through December. Saying this also, I know there are two records of late fall GCFL in PA one in November and the other in January! I

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reviewed the documentation on both of these birds and they appear correct even to call notes. Third, this bird's primary pattern would favor Ash-throated more than Nutting's. The primary panel color on this bird was distinct rufous color throughout and not two-toned or having a pale upper portion. Though these three points may not be very strong, I feel comfortable with the identification.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

Date of Sighting: 28 December 2000 to 30 December 2000

Location: SAFE HARBOR DAM

County: LANCASTER

Observer(s): Dan Heathcote, Nick Pulcinella, Rick Wiltraut, Jerry Book

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Dan Heathcote, Nick Pulcinella, Rick Wiltraut

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

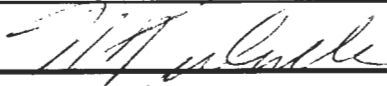
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Couchman	X							
P. Hess	X							
R. Lokes J. Stanley	X							
B. Reid	X							
P. Rodewald R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	6			1				
DECISION	X							

Comments: 6/1

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 3/2/02