







**Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) at Lititz, Lancaster County, PA, 30-Dec-2006**

Observer:

Geoff Malosh  
450 Amherst Ave.  
Moon Township, PA 15108-2654  
412.269.1413  
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Location: Backyard of 1209 Orchard Road, Lititz. Homeowner: Joyce Sheaffer

Temperature: 40 F  
Wind: calm  
Sky: mostly overcast  
Time: 8:45 AM to 9:05 AM  
Equipment: Leica 10x42 BN binoculars  
Camera: Canon 20D with 100-400mm f/5.6L lens  
Photos or audio recordings: 2 photos submitted, taken from a range of 30-40 feet (cropped from original)  
Accompanying observers: many  
Documentation date: January 10, 2007  
Submission date: January 10, 2007

**Photos:**

- AshThroatedFlyDec-30-2006a7s\_8575.jpg - side view
- AshThroatedFlyDec-30-2006c7s\_8572.jpg - front view

**Observation:**

I had arrived at the Sheaffer residence at 7:50 AM 30-Dec to try for the Ash-throated Flycatcher, which had been reported a few days earlier. It took nearly an hour for the bird to make its first appearance, which it finally did shortly after 8:45. It flew in from the southeast directly to the backyard at 1209 Orchard, where it began to forage for insects all around the yard, mostly near man-made objects such as windowsills, storm troughs, and patio furniture, and also on the ground. It spent the next 10 minutes foraging in this way at 1209 and in the yards of the houses immediately adjacent to 1209. It disappeared briefly, causing several birders in attendance to depart, but I recovered it about five minutes later and was able to observe it for another 5 minutes before it disappeared around the front of 1209. I stayed for another 30 minutes but I left when the bird did not reappear in that time.

**Discussion:**

The attached photo obviously shows a *Myiarchus* flycatcher of some kind (largish, brown back, brown crest, gray throat, yellowish underparts, etc). From the photos, the bird can probably be safely identified as a Ash-throated based on the following characters:

- Very diffuse yellow on the belly, as well as the pale gray breast and throat serve to eliminate Great Crested, which is brighter overall.
- Bill not large enough for Brown-crested, bird not large or heavy enough overall for same
- Dusky-capped and La Sagra's Flycatchers are more petite than Ash-throated. Dusky-capped shows very diffuse wing-bars (duller than the pictured bird) while La Sagra's often shows little or no yellow at all on the underparts.

During one instance (lasting about 5 seconds) I was able to observe the underside of the tail, which is usually necessary to definitively identify an out-of-place, silent *Myiarchus* flycatcher. What I saw was consistent with Ash-throated. There was extensive rufous on the central underside, darker brown-gray on the edges. The rufous appeared to terminate just before the tip of the tail, but I was not able to observe the underside of the tip directly in good light. To be honest, I wish I had seen this character more clearly (or better, photographed it), but I did see it briefly, and in conjunction with the other attributes described, I believe this bird can safely be called an Ash-throated.

**Prior experience:**

I have seen many Ash-throated Flycatchers in western North America. This was my first record in Pennsylvania or anywhere else east of the Mississippi River.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

1209 Orchard Rd., Lititz, PA (Lancaster County)

December 28-29, 2006 and January 4, 2007 (dates when the bird was seen by this observer)

Lighting conditions: clear skies w/ direct early morning sun (all three days)

Optics: Nikon 8x42 LX binoculars and Swarovski ATS 80 HD scope w/ 20-60x eyepiece

Description: I viewed the bird for about 45 minutes total over the course of two mornings, with far superior looks on the second morning (12/29). The bird was seen picking insects off of windows, gutters, chimneys, porchswings, siding, and other manmade objects in the neighborhood, often perching for 30 seconds or so between foraging sallies. The bird was obviously a *Myiarchus* flycatcher due to the medium to large size (approx. the length of an American Robin), long tail, long, sturdy (generally) bill, pale underparts with some yellow, and a rufous patch at the base of the primaries. The bird appeared to me to be an obvious Ash-throated Flycatcher due to the slim bill (still sturdy, but slim in comparison to the more familiar *Myiarchus* in PA, Great-crested Flycatcher) and restricted pale-yellow lower belly with a light white/gray breast and throat, along with easily seen rufous in the undertail. More specifically, the undertail pattern consisted of the two outer rectrices (which compose the visible portion of the folded undertail) being light-medium brown with wide rufous margins showing on the inner webs only. These rufous areas did not extend to the tip of the feathers. This is a typical tail pattern for an adult Ash-throated Flycatcher and eliminates similar species. The only troubling characteristic on this bird was the extensive pale base to the mandible. This is generally an indicator of hatch year flycatchers (fide Chris Wood), but the plumage of this individual clearly suggests AHY. However, as bare parts coloration is widely variable and this was the only characteristic that stood out as odd for ATFL, I would not consider it to be detrimental to the conclusion that the bird was certainly an Ash-throated. Characters pointing to an age of adult or After Hatch Year (AHY) include fresh, replaced primary coverts (hatching year birds would have retained these through the fall first prebasic molt and therefore would appear pale edged and worn) and lack of rufous edging to the central rectrices from above (as well as the above-described undertail pattern). I have seen hundreds of Ash-throated Flycatchers in the American southwest, and am also familiar with the other North American *Myiarchus* flycatchers.

Conclusive photos that I took supporting the identification of Ash-throated Flycatcher are included.

I consulted Pyle et al (1997) for ageing criteria before I observed the bird.

Tom Johnson  
Hummelstown, PA  
1/6/07

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**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: Ash-throated Flycatcher (Myiarchus cinerascens)

Date of Sighting: 21 December 2006 to 4 January 2007

Location: LANCASTER

County : LITITZ

Observer(s): Joyce Sheaffer m.obs

Date of Submission: 2007

Submitted by: T. Johnson, G. Malosh

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

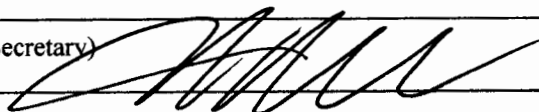
Recording: Audio

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
<del>J. Stanley</del> B. Carter	X							
E. Witmer	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

12/6/07