

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2013-06-20 17:56:40
Observer's Name	Alex Zorach
E-mail	cazort@gmail.com
Observer's Address	Street Address: 4045 Baltimore Ave. Apt. B8 City: Philadelphia State / Province: PA Postal / Zip Code: 19104 Country: United States
Species (Common Name)	Tropical / Couch's Kingbird
Species (Scientific Name)	Tyrannus melancholicus/couchii
Number of individuals	1
Observation Date and Time	06-20-2013 11:20 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S14461601
County	Philadelphia
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Philadelphia
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Grey's Ferry Crescent Trail
GPS coordinates of sighting	39.942741,-75.199678
Habitat	Barbed wire fence in linear city park: weedy area behind fence, mowed grass flower beds and scattered shrubs in front of it
Distance to bird	About 35 Feet
Viewing conditions	Clear, Sunny, Excellent View with no Obstructions
Optical equipment used	Nikon Monach 8x36 Binoculars
Description	Large flycatcher with very bright yellow breast, brightest in lower middle (just above feet when perched) but slightly paler under tail, and yellow extending quite far up into a darker, greenish yellow at upper breast. White throat, noticeable face mask pattern. Thick bill. Tail showed a marked notch. Did not see any white in tail in any posture--nor when flying. Gray back. From behind/above, tail looked similar in color to wings. Tended to perch rather upright but leaned only slightly forward. See photos for more on appearance.

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

Bird was flycatching: perched for long periods of time on a barbed wire fence, facing me most of the time although briefly faced away at a few points (no photos facing away). Bird moved head frequently to different positions, but held tail and body mostly still. Flight looked slightly faster and much more fluid than Eastern Kingbird--less hovering in place, faster and more swooping / curved / arc-like flights.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

Quickly eliminated Great Crested Flycatcher by lack of brown, reddish, dark grey, different shape, and unusual habitat. Eliminated Western Kingbird by large bill, bright yellow coloration, and yellow extending far up breast to a darker, greenish band across upper breast. Notched tail also supports elimination of Western Kingbird.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

Further comments can be found here:

<http://cazort.net/photos/yellow-bellied-kingbird-01>

Total of 9 photos, with all commentary on first photo, linked from main one.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

No. I am almost positive that it is Couch's/Tropical but I have not directly seen these species, and I have only a vague guess that it looks more like Tropical than Couch's.

During

National Geographic Field Guide 5th Ed.

After

Multiple: Crossley, Sibley, Further Web Resources (See Website/ First Photo for full list)

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Click to edit

PORC-webform00152

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2013-06-25 22:44:38
Observer's Name	George Armistead
E-mail	armistead.george@gmail.com
Phone	215-913-4783
Observer's Address	Street Address: 1626 Bainbridge Street Street Address Line 2: Apt. #2 City: Philadelphia State / Province: PA Postal / Zip Code: 19146 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	Tony Croasdale, Debbie Beer, Patty Rehn, Kate Atkins, Tom Magarian
Species (Common Name)	Tropical Kingbird
Species (Scientific Name)	Tyrannus melancholicus
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	male
Observation Date and Time	06-20-2013 4:20 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S14467003
County	Philadelphia
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Philadelphia
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Gray's Ferry Crescent Trail
GPS coordinates of sighting	39.9430852,-75.2017512
Habitat	urban park, open with scattered trees, fences, and trees along the Schuylkill River
Distance to bird	from 300 ft to as close as 80 feet
Viewing conditions	sunny, clear
Optical equipment used	Leica ultravids 10x42
Description	The bird was discovered by Alex Zorach earlier in the day

and identified by him as a Tropical/Couch's. I arrived at the trail and found the bird at 4:20pm. I knew from Alex's pictures it was a yellow-bellied kingbird that was not a Western and not a Cassin's. I knew Tropical was most likely but that the bird would have to be distinguished by voice to confirm that it was Tropical rather than Couch's. I also knew to be prepared to consider other yellow-bellied Tyrannus from South America such as White-throated and Snowy-throated.

After locating the bird, I spent time listening for it to call. I observed it for about 30 minutes before I finally heard it give the shrill twittering call of Tropical. (A bird I'm extremely familiar with from Central and South America, and to a lesser degree from Texas and Arizona. I heard it call 2 other times, but it was not very vocal. I did not bring my microphone and recording equipment as my mic has been broken for some time and I've not seen fit to get it repaired yet. Even if I had been at the ready, obtaining recordings would have been difficult as the bird rarely vocalized, and only called rather softly on each occasion, and there was considerable ambient noise. I attempted to stir it to call more vigorously by playing several recordings but it was unresponsive to all the recording I played towards it. It failed to respond to recordings of Tropical Kingbird (played cuts from Texas, Arizona, Brazil and Argentina), of Couch's or of White-throated or Snowy-throated Kingbirds.

In one the photos (flight shot) one can see the bird appears to have strongly emarginated primaries, indicating it is a male. The plumage I believe indicates an adult rather than a juvenile.

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

Fly-catching, making routine sorties from wires and from trees occasionally too. It wandered around the park a fair amount during the 1hr and 30 mins I observed it.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

By voice. The shrill twittering call was typical for Tropical Kingbird. I believe this particular bird might be distinguishable from Couch's based on the bill structure. I haven't done an in-depth analysis of the primary spacing to see if the photos yield enough information to separate this individual from Couch's, but that may be possible.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

A most intriguing question is whether this bird is of South American origin or not. Surely some percentage of Tropical Kingbird records for the eastern U.S. are of the nominate ssp; which is an austral migrant. *T. m. melancholicus* are found into the southern Caribbean with some regularity, and it is not hard to imagine one straying north in the U.S. (Whether Tropical Storm Andrea might have helped deliver this bird to PA is anyone's guess, but it at least seems possible). The overall state of wear in the bird's plumage might suggest it is an adult that finished breeding in Mar/Apr in South America and then might have overshot its wintering grounds when it migrated north for the Austral winter (boreal summer). I'm not sure anyone can tell for sure, but I suspect this bird is a *T. m. melancholicus* from South America.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes, because of the vocalization I heard and because of the bird's bill structure. I believe other South American Tyrannus can also be ruled out by the bird's appearance, and not just

the voice alone.

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings

[TK primary spacing -tail edge_MG_3515-1x.jpg](#)
[_MG_3605-1.jpg](#)
[_MG_3638-1.jpg](#)
[_MG_3648-1.jpg](#)
[_MG_3650-1.jpg](#)
[_MG_3652-1.jpg](#)

Click to edit

PORC-webform00154









©GEORGE L. ARMISTEAD



