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557-02-1990

On Saturday, Sept. 15, 1990, I visited Tinicum National Environmental Center in Philadelphia. The morning was warm and sunny, and I wasn't expecting much in the way of migrants. By the time I got to the path along the old trolley tracks, I had found only one American Redstart and one Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

About half-way down the tracks, I noticed a bird sitting over the impoundment with its back to me. It appeared to be a slim, medium-sized flycatcher -- very similar in size and shape to an Eastern Kingbird -- but as it began flycatching, it dropped into the vegetation below, showing a flash of yellow.

It finally came back up on the dead branches, and this is what I observed as it sat with its back to me:

The head, nape, mantle and back were a medium gray, the wings a darker gray with some buffy edges to the feathers. The tail, folded up tight as it perched, was black. When the bird began flycatching, I easily observed white in the outer tail feathers. The tail was not notched. The gray on the head extended onto the sides of the face; there was no sharp demarcation between the cap and the face and neck (as might be on an Eastern Kingbird, of which I saw none, or even an Eastern Phoebe). An indistinct black line extended through the eye.

The bill was black and close in size to an Eastern Kingbird's -- it was neither exceptionally long nor heavy.

The chest and upper breast were a pale gray and the throat was even paler than that. The yellow on the belly was a pale lemon yellow and was distributed evenly across the belly.

I am familiar with the Western Kingbird from two trips to Texas (where I also have seen Couch's Kingbird and Ash-throated

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Flycatcher), one trip to Arizona (where I've also seen Cassin's, Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds and Ash-throated Flycatcher) and one trip to Oregon. Additionally, I have seen Western Flycatchers in Cape May, N.J., a number of times in the fall.

SIMILAR SPECIES: I have eliminated both Great-crested and Ash-throated flycatchers because the bird was gray, not brown. I have eliminated Cassin's Kingbird by the light color of the throat and chin and the white outer tail feathers. I do not believe the bird was a Tropical or young Thick-billed Kingbird because the bill was not heavy and, again the outer tail feathers were white and the tail was dark.

I have eliminated a young Eastern Phoebe because of the grayness overall, the lack of a clear distinction between the cap and the cheeks, the contrasting wings, the black tail and the white outer tail feathers.

The bird continued flycatching, returning to various dead branches over the water; after about five minutes, it flew away from me over the impoundment. As far as I know, no one else reported seeing the bird at Tinicum that day.

In the few minutes I was able to observe the bird, I made special note to check the throat/upper chest and the tail, since I have studied the differences among western flycatchers.

I have no question in my mind that the bird I saw on Sept. 15 at Tinicum was a Western Flycatcher, *Tyrannus verticalis*.

Sandra Sherman

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # of

Species: **Western Kingbird**

Date of Sighting: **September 15, 1990**

Observer(s): **Sandra Sherman**

Date of Submission: **1990**

Submitted by: **Sandra Sherman**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater			X				
B. Haas			X				
F. Haas			X				
R. Leberman			X				
G. McWilliams			X				
S. Santner			X				
P. Schwalbe			X				
TOTALS			7				
DECISION			X				

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

3-24-91