























Fork-tailed Flycatcher

562-01 2006

Morrisville, Bucks Co., PA

June 3, 2006 1600-1730

Received a call about this flycatcher and was able to get to see the bird about an hour later. The bird was easily seen as it perched and fed in trees about 20-50 ft away. There were about 25-30 birders there during the course of my stay.

Description: an obvious flycatcher all dark above, white below with a medium length (5-7 inches) dark forked tail. The head and face were black with a hint of yellow feathers in the crown. The mantle was gray. The primaries were a faded brown with the edges abraded. The innermost right tertial was new and black. It appeared that there were new feathers growing in on p7 and p6. Also, one secondary covert was black (new). The tail feathers were heavily abraded and dark brown. New dark black tail feathers were molting in. The breast and belly were white. This feather pattern leans towards the bird being a first-year bird, that is a juvenile molting into adult plumage.

The bird actively fed by flitting back and forth from various branches catching insects and returning to the branches.

Separation from similar species: Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is mostly grayish white above with salmon colored flanks and axillaries. The species mostly easily confused with a juvenile Fork-tailed Flycatcher would be an Eastern Kingbird since the kingbird has the same basic color pattern both above and below. Although this Fork-tail did not have the long extended tail of an adult, the tail length it did have would surpass anything found on an Eastern Kingbird.

Familiarity with species: I have seen hundreds of Eastern Kingbirds in my 40+ years of birding and none have ever had a tail as long as this bird. I have seen Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on numerous trips to the mid-west and TX. I have seen about 50-75 Fork-tailed Flycatchers in Belize and Panama.

This report was written from notes taken during and immediately after the observation.

Nick Pulcinella
613 Howard Rd.
West Chester, PA 19380

Species (common & scientific): Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savanna*)

Number of Individuals: 1 **Sex(es):**

Age(s) & Plumage(s): 2nd year, undergoing molt

Date Seen: June 4, 2006 **Time:** 1:30 PM

Where Seen (Town/County): Morrisville, Bucks County, PA

Exact Location: Flood levee (dike) along Delmorr Ave., several hundred yards south of Trenton Ave., in a narrow strip of trees growing between the Delaware River and the dike.

Observer Reporting: Bill Keim

Name: William J. Keim

Address: 214 Watergate Dr., Upper Holland, PA 19053

E-mail: KeimWJ@hotmail.com

Telephone (optional): 215.741.2675

Other Observers (Only those who saw & identified the bird with you): I was alone—first responders to my cell phone call who verified were Bob Shaffer, Nick Zahn and Devich Farbotnik.

Distance to Bird: As close as 20 feet.

Viewing Conditions (Sky, weather, position of sun relative to you): Initially overcast, later with sun to my back. Mostly dry (a couple of raindrops at one point).

Optical Equipment Used: Swarovski 8.5 x 42 binoculars.

Habitat: Along the Delaware River, which is approximately 1500 feet wide at this point. Along the shoreline, a fairly narrow strip of 20-40 foot high silver maple, willow, sycamore and birch separates the river from a 10-15 foot high flood levee or dike, which runs parallel to the river throughout this area. West of the dike (away from the river) is Delmorr Ave., with residential areas, and Williamson Park, with ball fields and playgrounds. The river at this point contains several small islands and numerous exposed rocks.

Description (only what you observed; size relative to other species present; posture, body shape & proportions; colors & patterns of plumage; bill, eye, & leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual): Similar in size and shape to Eastern Kingbird, but with a longer and forked tail. Upon closer observation, the tail appeared to be broken off. My first assumption was that the shorter tail indicated a juvenal, which was later confirmed by other authorities who called it a second year bird undergoing molt. Using my pocket Sibley, I looked for distinguishing field marks. I was able to see the characteristic dark cap, white neck ring, light gray mantle, bright white chest and belly, grayish wings and tail, the tail having a thin white longitudinal stripe on each side. As previously mentioned, the tail was shorter than the illustration, and appeared to have broken off unevenly on each side, but was definitely forked, as was clearly seen when the bird occasionally flew and fanned it. I also thought the wings and tail were slightly more brownish than the illustration. As the bird moved around, or the breeze blew its feathers, a golden crown stripe was visible underneath the dark feathers on the top of its head.

Pennsylvania Rare Bird Report Form

Behavior (Be as specific as possible about what the bird was doing): The bird was most often perching, sometimes quite near the path along the top of the dike, apparently not at all shy. Occasionally it would fly out and catch an insect and return to its perch, in flycatcher fashion. It was most often at about eye level to an observer standing on the dike, but sometimes would drop lower into underbrush. It seldom flew very high in the trees. It moved from branch to branch, but stayed within an approximate 200 foot strip of trees for the nearly seven hours it was observed that day. As dusk settled in, it moved into some of the larger trees and we could no longer see it.

Vocalizations: None heard.

Supporting Evidence if Any (include with report):

Photo: Yes **Video Recording:** **Audio Recording:** **Drawing:**

Name, Address, e-mail, telephone (optional) of photographer, etc.

Submitted photos courtesy of:

Gerard Dewaghe

154 Lowell Ct.

Langhorne, PA 19047

GDewaghe@comcast.net

215.752.1668

Separation from Similar Species (How you eliminated others): First glance was reminiscent of Eastern Kingbird, but forked tail with thin white stripe on outer edge instead of white terminal band, along with light gray mantle, were diagnostic. Dark cap eliminated Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Discussion (Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it):

Previous Experience with this and/or Similar Species: Eastern Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (Texas)

Are you positive of your ID? (Why or why not): Yes--confirmed by many subsequent experienced observers.

References:

During Observation: Sibley Guide to the Birds - Eastern

After Observation: Sibley Guide to the Birds

Date of report: June 9, 2006

Signature of Observer:

William J. Keim

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Fork-tailed Flycatcher (Tyrannus savanna)

Date of Sighting: 4 June 2006 to 7 June 2006

Location: MORRISVILLE

County : BUCKS

Observer(s): B. Keim, A. Mirabella m.obs.

Date of Submission: 2006

Submitted by: B. Keim, G. Malosh, N. Pulcinella, J. Freiberg, J Williams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: Yes

Recording: No

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							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

11/16/06