
January 1984

A Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Florida

Florida Field Naturalist

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1984) "A Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Florida," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 12 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol12/iss1/5>

This Note is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

chain on their way to their breeding grounds. This may explain the curious spring record in St. Louis and the strange grouping of several sightings near Chicago, southwest of the known Michigan breeding grounds (Byelich 1976).

C. Wesley Biggs, Mary H. Clench, and Paul W. Sykes, Jr., generously provided background materials, historical records, and thoughtful revisions of the text.

LITERATURE CITED

- BYELICH, J. 1976. Kirtland's Warbler recovery plan. Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources.
- CLENCH, M. H. 1973. The fall migration route of Kirtland's Warbler. *Wilson Bull.* 85: 417-428.
- CORY, C. B. 1898. Kirtland's Warbler in Florida. *Auk* 15: 331.
- EDSCORN, J. 1979. Florida region. *Aud. Field Notes* 33: 171.
- GRISCOM, L., AND J. T. NICHOLS. 1960. Fall migration records of the Kirtland Warbler. *Cranbrook Institute of Science Bull.* 40: 39.
- MASON, C. 1960. Heretofore unpublished records of the Kirtland's Warbler. *Fla. Nat.* 33: 226.
- MCCLANAHAN, R. C. 1935. Fifty years after. *Fla. Nat.* 8: 56.
- STEVENSON, H. M. 1959. Florida region. *Aud. Field Notes* 13: 24.
- STEVENSON, H. M. 1962. Florida region. *Aud. Field Notes* 16: 24.
- VAN TYNE, J. 1953. Kirtland's Warbler. Pp. 417-428 *in* Life histories of North American wood warblers (A. C. Bent, Ed.). U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull.
- WALLACE, R. 1971. Interesting sightings at St. Marks Wildlife Refuge and elsewhere. *Fla. Nat.* 44: 63.
- H. P. Langridge, 1421 W. Ocean Ave., Lantana, Florida 33462 and Gloria Hunter, 1716 13th Ave. N., Lake Worth, Florida 33460.

Florida Field Naturalist 12: 9-10, 1984.

A Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Florida.—On 5 May 1981 at Oasis Ranger Station, Big Cypress National Preserve, Collier County, Florida, I observed a Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*). I first saw the bird at 1600 and watched it for approximately 20 min along the edge of a borrow pond. It was viewed as close as 10 m in good light with 7 x 35 binoculars. When observed, the bird was hawking insects from the bare branches of Brazilian pepper bushes (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) that dot the borrow pond edge. When perched, it sat at approximately a sixty degree angle to the ground, motionless except for moving its head to look about. Frequently it sallied forth after insects.

The bird was slightly larger than nearby Eastern Kingbirds (*Tyrannus tyrannus*). Its most distinctive feature was the length of the tail, which was equal to or slightly greater than the length of the body. The bird was generally dark above and light below. The head and upper nape were black with a thin longitudinal light-colored streak on the crown. The back and lower nape were light bluish-gray. The wings were darker brownish-gray, and the tail was almost black. The chin, throat, breast, belly, and under-tail coverts were white. The bill was stout and black. The eyes were dark, and the feet were relatively small and black.

There are five previously recorded observations of the Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Florida. A sighting on 5 Nov. 1952, 24 km west of Okeechobee along S. R. 78 in Glades County, was reported by Sprunt (1954, Florida bird life, New York, Coward McCann Inc.) Monroe and Marron (1980 Amer. Birds 34: 842-845) summarized three other sightings: one bird on 15-16 July 1974 at Sugarloaf Key, Monroe County; an immature bird on 17 Sept. 1976 at Rockledge, Brevard County; one bird on 17 October 1976 at Chokoloskee, Collier County. Edscorn (1977, Fla. Nat. 50: 30) reported one bird in mid April 1977 on Sannibel Island, Lee County.

Spring records of the Fork-tailed Flycatcher anywhere in North America are rare. Including the above sightings and others summarized by Monroe and Barron (1980), of 43 records only five were in March-June, including the April, 1977 sighting on Sannibel Island, Florida.—Michael W. Britten, 9705 Waterfront Dr., Manassas, Virginia 22110.

Florida Field Naturalist 12: 10-11, 1984.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl in northeast Florida.—On 10 November 1982 an unidentified surfer found a live Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) in the surf at South Ponte Vedra Beach, St. John's County, Florida. The bird was taken to the St. Augustine Wildlife Rehabilitation Center where it was treated for exposure and exhaustion, but it died on 14 November. Lisa Miller took the specimen to the Florida State Museum in Gainesville, where Dr. J. W. Hardy prepared it as a study skin (UF 20899). The bird was a male (testes 2x3 mm) and showed no signs of disease, but two small holes were found in the skin of the neck. The specimen was an adult, of the subspecies *A.a.acadicus*.

The owl was found in the same area of the state where a Northern Saw-whet Owl was collected on 31 October 1965 by F. H. Lesser and A. R. Stickley, Jr. (1967, Auk 84:425). The A.O.U. Checklist (1957, fifth ed., Baltimore, Maryland, American Ornithologists' Union) mentioned a winter record for Ft. Myers, Florida, but it is unsubstantiated and probably erroneous (H. M. Stevenson pers. comm.). Thus, the bird we report is the second specimen for the state, both from St. John's County.

That the owl was found in the surf is surprising. L. J. Soucy cited two instances of Northern Saw-whet Owls landing on fishing boats off the coast of New Jersey (1982, New Jersey Audubon 8:20). It would be rash to conclude that this owl migrates over the water with any regularity. It seems far more likely that occasionally individuals are blown offshore or become disoriented and wander out over the ocean.

In addition to these specimen records, there are two records of Saw-whet owl calls heard in northeast Florida. On the St. Augustine Christmas Count, 18 December 1982, Joseph Wilson deliberately sought this species by playing a tape of its call at many places near St. Augustine before dawn. Wilson heard a reply which, based on his experience with the species in the Great Smoky Mountains, he believed was a Saw-whet. This call was also heard by Robert Richter, who was with Wilson.

On the Jacksonville Christmas Count, 30 December 1972, Peggy Powell and Terry Reed were near Buckhead Bluff, off Island Drive, Duval County, Florida, where they heard a call at dusk which Powell believed was a Northern Saw-