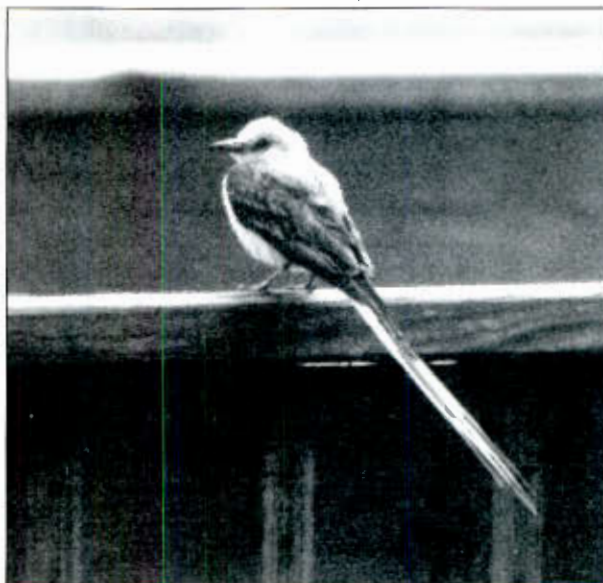


Kleen told me that apparently, a pair of Scissor-tailed from the previous summer (2000) had indeed built a nest and fledged young in a large, isolated pine (*Pinus sp.*) tree in a rural farmyard near the edge of a large cornfield. The significance of the summer 2000 observation went unreported by all of the parties involved for almost a year, until the excitement of the Union County nest brought the details of the 2000 Randolph County nesting to light (see Kleen et al. 2001). Well, I still have the first nests for American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) and Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) to find ....

As early as 1965, Jean and Richard Graber (1965) hypothesized that “perhaps in the near future the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher will be found nesting in Illinois”. Although it has taken 35 years for the first definite nesting evidence to appear, there were a few records in between that suggested this species may be trying to nest. A bird said to be in “immature plumage” was noted by S. Vasse and William George between Cobden and Anna in Union Co. 25 July 1970 (Fawks 1970). Fleig (1971) hinted that two birds (apparently a male and female) seen in the American Bottoms of Randolph County may have bred there in the summer of 1967. At least three other summer records from Randolph and nearby Monroe Counties in 1995, 1998, and 1999, pre-staged the 2000 nesting.

Through the end of the fall season in 2001, there have been a total of 82 sightings of individual Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in 45 Illinois counties since the first sighting by W.E Loucks near Peoria in 1885 (Graber et al. 1974; Bohlen 1978, 1989; Robinson 1996). This species has been seen every year since 1978 in Illinois except for six (1980, 1983, 1985, 1989, 1994, and 1997). (See Figure 2 for a photo of a bird seen in DuPage County in 1998.) This species now meets “regular” status, as defined in the Checklist of Illinois State Birds (1999), where it is currently listed as “casual”. These include sightings published and garnered from Kleen’s Illinois Department of Conservation Periodic and Seasonal Reports (1974-1984) and the old *Illinois Birds and Birding* journals (1985-1991), and *Meadowlarks* Vol. 1-10 (1992-2002), as well as other standard references already mentioned, as well as a few unpublished records. These records come from every corner of the state, and have become so numerous in recent years that the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee has removed the species from its official list of review species, although details are always encouraged from observers, especially if it represents a new county record or out of season report.

Although few birds have been sexed, at least in



**Figure 2.** Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. 6 August 1998. Batavia, Du Page County. Photo by Bob Andriani.

the published literature, there seems to be a fairly equal number of females (10) to males (12) in those records that have reported gender. For the 67 birds with dates, birds by month include April-7, May-32, June-10, July-10, (plus at least 1 other summer record), August-5, September-2, October-5, and the only winter (and CBC) record from 29 December in Union County in the Mississippi River floodplain (see Robinson 1996). In addition, the 2000 and 2001 nesting pairs continued into August and at least June, respectively, and birds found in the fall season of 2000 and 2001 stayed into October and September, respectively. The fall 2000 Carlyle Lake bird had the longest stay of any Scissor-tailed seen in the state (outside the breeding season), lingering 52 days! Interestingly, the three earliest spring dates all come from northern Illinois, 15, 22, and 22 April in Bureau, DeKalb, and Cook Counties, respectively. The year 2001 marked the largest incursion of birds into Illinois ever with five spring, one summer, and two fall reports.

The heart of the range of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is in western Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, with the birds also regularly nesting in good numbers as close as southwestern Missouri (see Robbins and Easterla 1992, Jacobs and Wilson 1997), and continues to expand its breeding range northward and eastward in Missouri. One pair nested (on a utility pole) as close to Illinois as I-44 in west St. Louis County in 1991 (Webster Groves Nature Study Society 1998). This species has also nested once in each