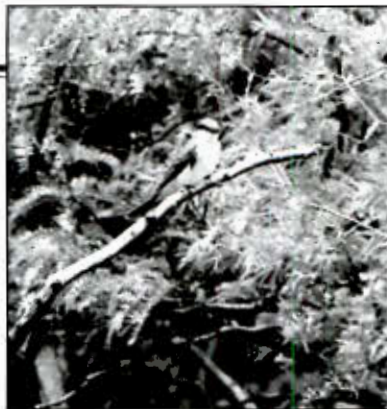


# First Illinois and Regional Record of Gray Kingbird

by Dan Kassebaum

On 15 May 1999 my morning birding began at Hazlet State Park, Carlyle Lake, one of the largest man-made lakes in south central Illinois. This day I wanted to find some migrants I had not discovered on the state Spring Bird Count a week earlier. The first good omen of the day was an adult Mississippi Kite, since this is north of its typical southern Illinois habitat. My next stop was the White-tail Access for shorebirds, and unfortunately I found few shorebirds and just a few ducks. I returned to the town of Carlyle for lunch. On the way back I took Boulder Road; while driving, especially around the lake, I'm always checking the telephone lines for birds. On this day, I discovered an absolutely amazing rarity for a telephone line bird! I had just turned on to the Boulder Road and had driven less than a half mile when I spotted an unusual bird. My fragmented recollection, while in a moving vehicle, went something like this: there was this bird silhouette—on a phone line—bird on wire—kingbird—large bill—STOP! I stopped, set up my scope, and worked at this bird's identification. I couldn't believe my eyes—a Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*), in my scope! This kingbird was particularly cooperative, as are most kingbirds. This bird flew away, then returned. I recorded all my field notes without any disturbance from other cars.

The bird used the phone lines as well as the willows and cottonwoods that lined a nearby creek. It fed on dragonflies, and seemed oblivious to my presence. It made flights of 100 yards or more in pursuit of dragonflies, returning each time to the little wooded creek. Excellent size and



*Gray Kingbird, 15 May 1999, Carlyle Lake. First State and Regional Record. Photo by Mike Seiffert.*

plumage comparisons could also be made with a nearby Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) as both birds perched on the same telephone line. Knowing the importance of this rare bird, I had to make some decisions about co-verifying this extreme rarity. I left this magnificent bird to make phone calls. I drove to the Boulder campground to contact Mark and Mike Seiffert of Carlyle. They arrived, and luckily the bird was just where I had left it. Mike walked right under the bird on the wire and took two roles of film. Many other birders arrived the next day but, unfortunately, the kingbird was gone. Luckily, Mike's photographs were excellent, and they documented not only the first state record for Illinois, but also for the region. The Gray Kingbird is listed as casual on the east coast to Massachusetts in the seventh edition of the AOU check-list (1998) and has been known to accidentally wander up the east coast as far as New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Precious few inland vagrant records exist. In the interior of the North America only four acceptable records exist: one from Michigan (McPeck 1994), and three records all from inte-

rior Ontario, Canada (Godfrey 1986; Speirs 1985). Interestingly, there's also a vagrant record for British Columbia (DeSante and Pyle 1986).

A color photograph of the Illinois Gray Kingbird record appears in the pictorial highlights of the 1999 North American bird spring migration (North American Birds 53: 342) taken by Mike Seiffert. The Gray Kingbird was the most remarkable vagrant and rarity to be added to the Carlyle Lake bird site list of 314 species not to mention being a first state and Middle-western Prairie region record.

## Literature Cited

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