

Illinois bird? The Fork-tailed Flycatcher!

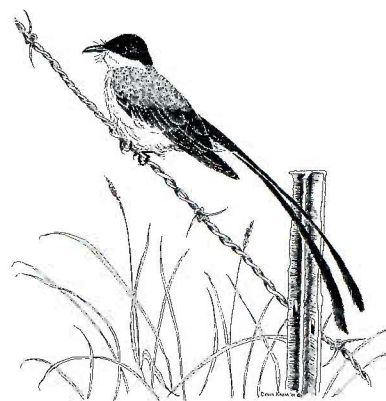
This beautiful bird from South and Central America is so obvious that even a non-birder would notice its presence, only increasing the chances of it being found. There are now over 100 records of this bird east of the Mississippi River with most falling into a well-established pattern of vagrancy in eastern North America, showing up annually on the Gulf Coast and Atlantic Seaboard (Lockwood 1999). What makes a future Illinois record even more believable are all the records from nearby states and provinces including Kentucky, Wisconsin (3 records), Michigan (2), and Minnesota (2), Nebraska, and Arkansas. There are even records from western and eastern Ontario (Lockwood 1999).

There are four subspecies, but we'd most likely get the subspecies found in southeast South America, which is the farthest away from Illinois. Based on the current vagrancy pattern, Illinois birders have the best chance to find this bird here from May through June. However, it's three times more likely to appear in the fall, with eastern U.S. records mainly falling between late August through early November. Indeed, a Fork-tailed Flycatcher was observed in Wisconsin in fall 2000, after this article was written. Look for a Fork-tailed Flycatcher perched on fence posts or low shrubs in open habitats such as pastures or prairie borders. The Lake Michigan lakefront would also be a likely location for its first appearance. See the article cited above for identification details on the various subspecies along with other detailed information on this species.

As for this prized flycatcher, even Ridgway had it on his 1881 wish list; it's now been 120 years and counting that birders have been expecting a visit from this species. Will you be the one to introduce it to the Illinois state list?

**Here's a recap of our winners.** The number in parenthesis represents the number of persons who put the species in first place.

1. Fork-tailed Flycatcher (4)
2. Green Violet-Ear (1)
3. Brambling (4)
4. Long-billed Murrelet
5. Bullock's Oriole (3)
6. Cave Swallow (1)
7. Anna's Hummingbird (1)
8. Kelp Gull
9. Hermit Warbler (2)
10. Black-tailed Gull
11. Inca Dove
12. Roseate Spoonbill



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**Meadowlark**