

## Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Visits DeKalb County

On 25 April 1995, I was informed by a local biologist and co-worker, Terry Martin, that a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) was discovered by Matt, Philip, and Rita Nielsen in a south-central DeKalb County horse pasture. I had seen this species only in field guides. On 23 April, Phil Nielsen and his son, Matt, went out to care for the horses on their farm when Matt noticed a distinctive-looking bird sitting on the barbed wire fence along the pasture's south edge.

Due to its distinguishing features, the Nielsen family was able to identify the bird as a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Bohlen (1989) describes this species as "unmistakable" due to its long tail and gray body, which contrasts with salmon wing linings.

At noon on 25 April, another biologist, Janice Grainger, and I visited the pasture. We scanned the pasture with binoculars for 30 minutes to no avail. About 4:30 p.m., we returned with still and video cameras. The warm and sunny day had become cloudy and it was sprinkling. As we turned east onto Shabbona Grove Road, we watched the barbed wire fence along the south edge of the pasture. Finally, we saw the flycatcher sitting on the fence about one meter from the ground.

The bird, an adult male, flew off into the pasture and perched on some small, woody stems near ground level. We videotaped it as it displayed the flycatcher's characteristic sallying behavior. The bird flew out a few meters close to the ground, spread its long tail feathers, flashed its bright salmon wing linings, then returned to its perch. At times, it hovered and moved in a zig-zag pattern.

The habitat was appropriate for this species - an open pasture with a wooded creek running along its northern edge with two fence rows of trees bisecting the eastern half. The activity of a small number of horses moving in the grassy area stirred up insects, facilitating the bird's hunting.

Within 30 minutes, Terry Martin and his wife, Sherrie, arrived. Shortly after, Philip Nielsen arrived with Matthew and his daughter, Sarah, to tend the horses. We were allowed access to the pasture and spent about 30 minutes enjoying and photographing the scissor-tail in the drizzle.

On 26 April, I returned to the pasture, but did not see the bird from the roadside. On 28 April, I returned again



*Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, De Kalb Co., 25 April 1995.*

*Photo by Terese Dudek.*

with Anita Almeda and the flycatcher was sitting on the barbed wire fence within 10 meters of the spot it occupied the previous Tuesday. Other area birders also saw the flycatcher during this week.

This bird may have been an over-migrant as Bohlen (1989) suggested. In Illinois, this species is considered a rare vagrant from the southwestern plains. The species is expanding its range north and east, with nesting documented in Tennessee, north central Missouri, and Iowa. Northern Illinois records include Winnebago County (1986) and Winnetka (1987) (Bohlen 1989).

### Literature Cited

Bohlen, H.D. 1989. *The Birds of Illinois*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington, IN.

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## 58 Winter Wrens at Jackson Park, Cook County

An unprecedented fall-out of Winter Wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) took place on 23 April 1995, when a tally of 58 individuals was recorded in Jackson Park on Chicago's lake front. Previous spring high counts for Illinois have apparently not exceeded 20 birds (Mlodinow 1984, Bohlen 1989).

This heavy wren passage occurred amid a notably dull spring migration, during which only one species of warbler was recorded through 23 April. Only one spring migrant, a Marsh Wren, appeared during the 20 to 23 April period. Temperatures during this time remained below normal, especially along Chicago's lake front. Moderate winds on 23 April were from the northeast.

In all, my survey of Wooded Island in Jackson Park yielded 15 individual Winter Wrens. South of the golf course, located at the southern end of Wooded Island, I checked a tangle of thickets favored by these wrens and found six birds all visible on the same pile of wood chips. I found an additional seven more birds in the thickets at this site.

Groups of two or three birds were found at other locations within Jackson Park. I was careful to check many sites twice and came up with identical numbers of

**Meadowlark**