

The severe weather must have passed through between 16 June and 26 June 2004 because Kay and Michael Kutska observed the pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and their nest on 16 June 2004, but then upon returning on 26 June, they noted that the nests were missing as was much of the nest tree's upper canopy (IBET report - 29 June 2004).

Evidently after the storms destroyed their nest, the pair shifted their activity farther east, closer to Route 3. Several people reported seeing the pair feeding on the southern levee road and in trees within a few hundred feet of Route 3. Eric Walters was the first to report that the pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers had constructed a new nest in a different cottonwood. His initial observations took place on 3 July 2004. Later details indicated that Cindy McKee had previously found this nest on 26 June 2004. The orientation of the new nest was similar to the original because it, too, was placed on an eastern branch. The new cottonwood was reported to be the first tree on the southern levee road immediately to the west of Route 3, which was within Union County. Eric observed the female flycatching from this tree and even noted that she perched on the utility wires on the east side of Route 3. Eric stated that the female spent a significant amount of time brooding at the nest, but he did not observe any behavior indicating that young had hatched (IBET report - 5 July 2004). Marlys Oosting reported seeing the male as well as the female on her nest on 8 July 2004 and described seeing the male bring food to the female on the nest (IBET report - 8 July 2004). Several observers trying for the Scissor-tails after 8 July found neither member of the pair and noted that Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) were roosting in the second nest tree. Brian Herriott, Dan Kassebaum, and I visited this site on 17 July 2004 and found large concentrations of grackles still present along the Big Muddy. In fact, we also noted that grackles were perched on

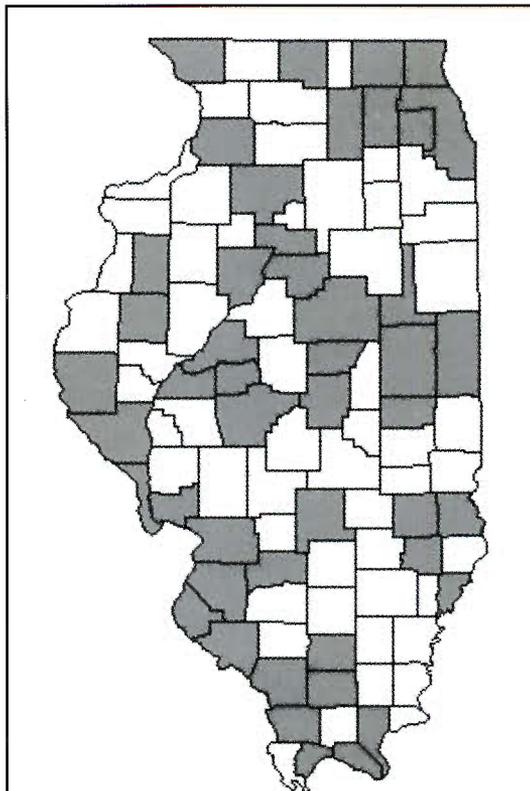


Figure 1. An Illinois map highlighting 48 counties with Scissor-tailed Flycatcher records. Shaded counties have one or more reports within their respective borders.

the nest tree. We were unable to locate a nest in this tree, so it is possible that the grackles or some other entity removed the nest. However, another nest was found by Eric Walters about one-half mile away from this site, and later landowners reported a family group there. This could likely have been the renesting of the pair whose nest may have been destroyed by the grackles.

St. Clair County - 2004

On 6 June 2004, Tim Dever discovered a male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher near the town of Lenzburg in St. Clair County. After hearing about this sighting from a phone conversation with Tim, Dan Kassebaum checked the area on 17 June 2004 and found a female along with the previously reported male. He did not find evidence of nesting on this date. Dan and I, later joined by Albert Seppi, visited the site on 19 June 2004 and

easily found the pair feeding in an overgrown agricultural plot on the east side of Fred Huth Road at its intersection with Route 13. At the time, the field was being cut by a local farmer with his old tractor. The Scissor-tailed Flycatchers took advantage of this situation for feeding and would remain very close to the tractor as it passed. Both birds spent large amounts of time sitting on the ground atop the freshly cut grass and weeds. Occasionally, the birds would perch along the utility wires that ran parallel to Fred Huth Road. It wasn't long after Albert arrived that we saw the female fly in a straight and direct path to the south across Route 13 to one of the few large trees in the immediate area. We thought this "directness" was peculiar and decided to scope the tree to see if there was a nest. Indeed there was! Dan and I found the female attending to a grassy mass near the center of the tree. The nest was placed in a Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) positioned in the yard of a small farming complex complete with a barn, grain elevators, Rock Pigeons (*Columba livia*), and a house, all

of which were on the south side of Route 13. The nest site was in a hazardous position for the flycatchers — it was less than 75 ft away from a very busy highway.

By chance, some people that Albert knew drove by and stopped to see what we were watching. We pointed to the Scissor-tailed Flycatchers feeding quite close in the field next to us along Fred Huth Road. When we showed them the nest in the yard across the street, they mentioned they knew the landowners. With permission from the homeowners, we were soon viewing the flycatchers and their nest at close range. This position gave us the ability to approximate that the nest was about 30 ft high. The close view of the nest also allowed us to determine that it was loose mass of plant material largely composed of dried grasses and woody stems. Once in a while, the female would bring material to the nest. After inserting