

conversations with other observers.

Size: In overall length, the Ash-throated was slightly smaller than the Great Crested Flycatcher. This was only apparent when the two were sitting together in a tree, as happened once when I was watching them. The body bulk seemed about the same in the two, neither seeming particularly "slimmer" than the other. However, the bill of the Ash-throated was distinctly smaller than that of a Great Crested, as will be described below. This difference in bill size was readily apparent at all times.

Bill and head: The bill was shorter, narrower, and more tapered when viewed from the side than that of a Great Crested Flycatcher. The bill was one-half to five-eighths the length of the head. Both upper and lower jaws tapered nearly uniformly from the base to the tip, unlike the thicker and more blunt-tipped bill of a Great Crested Flycatcher. The bill was also narrower at the base than a Great Crested Flycatcher's. The bill was black, without any pale coloration on the mandible. The gape was swollen, fleshy, and dull fleshy-pink, indicative of a juvenal bird. Johnson termed the gape and mouth lining "orangeish."

The head had a notably square-crested look. The cap was warm brown with a bit of olive overtone. This color contrasted with the cooler grayish-olive of the sides of the head and the forehead. The nape was grayer than the sides of the head, though the colors blended together smoothly. The cheeks were notably dull gray without olive or brown tones.

Underparts: The throat was a very pale gray color, appearing whitish in some lighting conditions, and always clearly paler than a Great Crested's throat. The throat and breast of the Ash-throated were essentially the same in color and contrasted very little with the belly, unlike the sharp contrast between the

breast and belly evident on Great Crested Flycatchers. The belly was largely white with a faint yellowish tone on the sides and lower belly. This color was notably less yellow than that of the Great Cresteds.

Back and wings: The back was fairly uniformly grayish-olive, slightly darker than the nape, and distinctly paler and grayer than that of a Great Crested. Both greater and lesser wing coverts were broadly tipped with pale buffy, forming two conspicuous wingbars. The primaries in the folded wing showed bright rufous edging while the secondaries were edged with pale yellow. The tertials were dull, dark brown with broad, pale straw-colored edges. The primaries extended an estimated 1-to-1.5 cm beyond the secondaries and tertials.

Tail pattern:

The tail showed features of both adult and juvenal patterns, and was heavily worn. The tail feathers, from above, showed dark brownish centers with a slight rufous overtone. The central tail feathers were fairly broadly edged with rufous, a diagnostic juvenal pattern. There were also rufous edges to the other tail feathers which gave the tail an overall rufous tone that was more prominent when viewed edge-on than from directly behind. One notable feature of the tail, as seen from above, was the two zones of paler brownish coloration that crossed the entire tail as bands. These growth zones suggest that all of the feathers were grown in at the same time, as would be expected of a juvenal bird. From below,

the tail showed extensive rufous coloration, slightly paler than in a Great Crested Flycatcher. Once, when the tail was folded, the brown of the outer webs of each outer rectrix extended to the tip of the feather, and expanded to encompass the tip of the inner web. This tail pattern was clear when

*Juvenal Ash-throated Flycatcher,
McCormick Place, Cook Co., 31 Aug. 1995.
Photos by John O'Brien.*



I saw the bird closely in cloudy weather, but was not apparent in bright light. However, at one point in bright light, several of us saw the Ash-throated from behind with light shining through the spread tail, and the pattern of dark at the tips of the feathers was remarkably clear. Dark-tipped rectrices are considerably less obvious in adults than they are in immatures.

Behavior: The Ash-throated Flycatcher behaved differently than did the nearby Great Crested Flycatchers. The bird tended to stay at a height of 3 to 6 feet in low bushes, sitting still, then making short, low flights. It picked either insects or fruits off the bushes, and it also