

caught insects on the ground by diving down from a bush. Occasionally, it perched high in the locust trees with the Great Crested Flycatchers, but it preferred low perches. No calls were heard.



Identification of *Myiarchus* flycatchers: The *Myiarchus* flycatchers present a notoriously difficult identification problem. Distinguishing between species requires a great deal of caution and attention to details. Six species of *Myiarchus* have been recorded in North America: four breeders, Great Crested, Brown-crested (*M. tyrannulus*), Ash-throated, and Dusky-capped (*M. tuberculifer*), as well as two tropical vagrants, La Sagra's (*M. sagrae*) and Nutting's (*M. nuttingi*). All of the breeding species have been recorded as long-distance vagrants in North America, so it is important that consideration be given to all possible species when identifying a vagrant.

Observers in Illinois normally have to contend only with Great Crested Flycatcher. Fortunately, this is the most visually distinctive of the North American *Myiarchus*, so detecting other species is relatively easy for experienced observers. Identification of the Great Crested Flycatcher can generally be based on the body plumage color. Great Cresteds

have a medium gray throat and breast that contrast sharply with the variably bright lemon yellow belly. The head, cheeks, and back are fairly uniform olive. The thick bill has a curved culmen, a pale base to the mandible, and a rarely-seen, light orange mouth lining. Rectrix pattern (in all plumages after the postjuvinal molt) consists of a brown outer web and a rufous inner web; the rufous color extends to the tip of the feather and touches the shaft or is separated from it by a brown stripe no more than 2 mm wide (Phillips and Lanyon, 1970; Pyle et al., 1987).

The upperparts of the Ash-throated Flycatcher are more grayish-brown with a variable olive tone. The cheeks are gray, contrasting with the brownish cap, and extend back to merge with a grayish nuchal collar (Lanyon 1961). The throat and breast are pale grayish, showing little contrast with the pale yellow belly. As seen from the side, the bill is relatively thin and tapered; the culmen relatively straight. The mandible is usually black or dark brown at the base, and the mouth lining is pinkish-flesh. The rectrix pattern, in postjuvinal plumage, is diagnostic; on at least the outermost rectrix the brown of the outer web extends across most or all of the tip of the rufous inner web. The inner rectrices may or may not have this pattern. The reader is referred to Lanyon 1961 for full treatment of this complex character.

While the characteristics listed eliminate the Great Crested Flycatcher, a much more difficult problem is presented with the separation of Ash-throated from Brown-crested and Nutting's flycatchers. The Brown-crested Flycatcher wanders in winter to southern Louisiana and Florida (Phillips and Lanyon, 1970), and is not impossible to imagine as a vagrant in Illinois. The Brown-crested Flycatcher is gener-

ally thought of as the largest *Myiarchus* in our area, with the thickest and widest bill. However, most field guide measurements, e.g. the National Geographic Society (1987) and even Pyle et al. (1987), consider only the western North and Middle American race (*M. t. magister*). The race *cooperi* which breeds in southern Texas and eastern Mexico and has been collected in Louisiana, is significantly smaller. Most of its measurements overlap extensively with those of the Ash-throated (Lanyon, 1960), and its plumage pattern is quite similar. The Brown-crested Flycatcher has a unique tail pattern, with a brown stripe along the shaft of each feather covering the outer and part of the inner web but not spreading to cover the tip (Phillips and Lanyon 1970). As with the other species, this pattern is not applicable to juvenal plumage. The Brown-crested is generally brighter yellow below than the Ash-throated, and has a browner face. Even the small race *M. t. cooperi* has a thicker bill, with a more curved culmen and wider base. The mouth lining is pale flesh-colored. The thin bill, gray face, and very pale yellow belly suggest that the McCormick Place bird was not a Brown-crested Flycatcher.

Finally, consideration must be given to Nutting's Flycatcher (*M. nuttingi*). Nutting's Flycatcher is a tropical Middle American flycatcher ranging from central Sonora to northwestern Costa Rica (Lanyon, 1961, Howell and Webb 1995), and has been recorded at least twice in Arizona, with other probable reports (Bowers and Dunning 1987). Although Nutting's is an extraordinarily unlikely candidate for vagrancy to northern Illinois, it is worthwhile to evaluate the McCormick Place bird in this context. Nutting's is very similar to Ash-throated but is slightly smaller (with extensive overlap in measurements) and rounder-winged (Lanyon 1961). It