

**FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*TYRANNUS SAVANA*)  
SIGHTED ON DAUPHIN ISLAND**

William J. Bremser, Jr. and Robert A. Duncan

The Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) breeds from southeastern Mexico south to central Argentina and Uruguay (*AOU Checklist of North American Birds*, 1983). The nominate race, *T. s. savana*, which breeds in Argentina and Chile, is highly migratory and moves north during the austral winter (French, 1991). It is casual in eastern North America to southern Canada primarily along the Atlantic coast with 14 records for Florida (Robertson et al, per. com.). All but one specimen from North America are of the migratory nominate race, *T. s. savana* (*AOU Checklist*).

At 1:20 PM on 20 April 1992, Bill Bremser and Bob Duncan spotted a Fork-tailed Flycatcher hawking insects during a heavy rainstorm near the airport on Dauphin Island, AL. It was immediately identified as a Fork-tailed Flycatcher and was observed for 25 minutes as it perched on needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*) in the marsh. During this time the observers watched from their car as it sallied out after insects in the rain. It was observed as close as 30 feet (ten meters) with 10X40 and 7X35 binoculars and a Bausch and Lomb 30X spotting scope. Its use of needle rush as a perch corresponds to its habit of using perches three feet (one meter) or less within its normal range (Stiles & Skutch, 1991).

Both observers concurred on the following field marks: black crown and nape; sides of head dark contrasting with a white throat; gray back; medium black bill; wings darker than back but not as dark as the crown; tail blackish, about as long as the bird's body, but not as long as those depicted in the guides for an adult; outer rectrices bordered with a thin white edge; all white underside extending through the under-tail coverts; white under-wing linings (seen well at times); and the diagnostic yellow crown patch. The yellow crown patch, which is not normally seen, was very evident probably due to the heavy rain conditions which can expose crown patches in such species as the Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) and Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*). The relative length of the tail was approximate to that sketched by Summerour (1988) in *Alabama Birdlife*. Lack of a whitish border setting off the gray back from the black nape indicated the nominate race. The yellow crown patch and shorter tail indicated either a late immature or a moulting adult.

Bill Summerour, a biology professor at Jacksonville State University in north Alabama, and three of his students observed a Fork-tailed Flycatcher at Fort Morgan on 24 April 1988, but Summerour was the only experienced observer present. Therefore, this first sighting was listed as hypothetical as mandated by the by-laws of the Alabama Bird Records Committee. Since Bremser and Duncan were able to show the Dauphin Island bird to five other experienced observers, the species can now be taken from the hypothetical list, pending approval of the Bird Records Committee, and placed on the official list of birds occurring in Alabama.

**Literature Cited**

American Ornithologists Union. 1983. *Checklist of North American Birds*, 6th ed., Allen Press, Lawrence, KS.

French, Richard F. 1991. *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithica, NY.

Robertson, W. B. and G. E. Woolfenden. *Florida Bird Species: An Annotated List* (unpublished).

Stiles, Gary F. and Alexander Skutch. 1991. *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithica, NY.

Summerour, Bill. 1988. Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) Sighted at Fort Morgan. *Alabama Birdlife*, Vol. 35, No. 1.

**William J. Bremser, Jr.**, 1124 Laguna Lane, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561 and **Robert A. Duncan**, 614 Fairpoint Dr., Gulf Breeze, FL 32561.

### CASPIAN TERN (*STERNA CASPIA*) MOVEMENTS ALONG THE MOBILE-TENSAW RIVERS

William J. Bremser, Jr. and Robert A. Duncan

The Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) is cosmopolitan in its distribution. In North America it breeds from eastern Washington, east to the Great Lakes, James Bay and along the Atlantic coast from Newfoundland and south to Florida and Texas. It winters from central California south to Baja California and from North Carolina south along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts to eastern Mexico, northern Columbia and Venezuela (*AOU Checklist of North American Birds*, 1983). It is considered primarily a coastal migrant, less frequently using large rivers in the interior (*AOU Checklist*). In Alabama, Imhof (1976, *Alabama Birds*) considers it a common winter visitor and an uncommon migrant along the larger river valleys, especially in fall. In recent years it has bred in small numbers on Gailliard Island in Mobile Bay.

From 21-26 April 1992, Bill Bremser periodically watched a steady procession of Caspian Terns through a 30X spotting scope from the 10th floor of the River view Hotel in Mobile as they moved northward up the Mobile River. Observations were sporadic and took place at various times of the day. Birds were seen moving north during the morning, mid-day and late afternoon. None were seen flying south. On five different occasions, Duncan and/or I have observed a steady procession of Caspian Terns from Hurricane Landing, ten miles (16 kilometers) north of the mouth of the Tensaw River, in April and May from 1987 to 1991. Birds were always moving north, or upriver.

These observations indicate that the birds are common spring migrants in the Mobile delta areas. An estimate by Bremser of four terns per minute, or 2400 terns per day, indicates that the lower river systems of Alabama are being used as corridors for movement by these terns. It is not likely, given the constant direction of movement, that these terns were "locals" from the Mobile Bay colony. The magnitude of the numbers would preclude that possibility as well. It is probable that these birds were migrating from wintering areas to breeding grounds in the interior of the continent. Observers should note whether large numbers of these terns are moving up the Tombigbee and Alabama-Black Warrior river systems in April. – **William J. Bremser, Jr.**, 1124 Laguna Lane, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561 and **Robert A. Duncan**, 614 Fairpoint Dr., Gulf Breeze, FL 32561.