

**FIRST ALABAMA BREEDING RECORD OF GRAY KINGBIRD
(*TYRANNUS DOMINICENSIS*) FOLLOWING HURRICANE
DANNY**

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Gray Kingbirds have been known breeders in Alabama since at least 14 May 1950, when the first nest and first state record were reported from Ft. Morgan by H. M. Stevenson (Auk 68: 510-511). They nested regularly along the coast until July 1997, when Hurricane Danny stalled over the Alabama coast for approximately 36 hours. Though only a Saffir-Simpson Category I storm, massive amounts of rainfall were recorded in some areas, with relentless winds for that extended period. This took a heavy toll on local passerines. For example, Brown-headed Nuthatches (*Sitta pusilla*) were eliminated from Dauphin Island in adjacent Mobile County, and the small Gray Kingbird population across the Alabama coast shared a similar fate (Greg D. Jackson, pers. comm.). Though the kingbirds have occurred sporadically along the coast since then, no breeding evidence has been reported following Hurricane Danny until the present record (Greg D. Jackson, pers. comm.).

On 18 July 2005 at 1600 hours, I was walking around the Enclave Condominium at Orange Beach, Baldwin County, Alabama, when I heard the distinct call of a Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) coming from across Perdido Beach Boulevard. I investigated the rear of Hazel's Restaurant and was immediately mobbed by a pair of Gray Kingbirds. They had gray upperparts and white underparts and were a little smaller than an American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*); heads were large with heavy bills and distinct dark masks through the eye. Their tails were forked, and shape and behavior were typical of a *Tyrannus* kingbird. The birds were later seen flycatching for large insects. I am thoroughly familiar with this bird, both by sight and sound, having volunteered for the Breeding Bird Atlas for two months in Puerto Rico where Gray Kingbirds are very common.

A quick search of the parking lot revealed a lone bare tree about 6 m (20 feet) high with a third kingbird perched near the top. I focused my binoculars on the third bird. It looked quite similar to the other two kingbirds but had a distinctly shorter tail, and I later heard it make a higher pitched call (presumably a begging call) to the other two birds. I immediately guessed that this was a fledgling, and this was later confirmed when one of the parents caught a large

insect and fed it to this third bird that was making the higher pitched call.

The three kingbirds were observed frequently for five additional days. They were usually together and stayed either in the lone parking lot tree or in one of a group of pines at the edge of the parking lot. I searched for the nest, which I know from personal experience is usually a conspicuous clump of sticks, but never found one.

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