



British Columbia's First Record of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

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The chronology of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*; Figure 1) occurrences in British Columbia through 1997 was summarized by Campbell et al. (2001). The species was first reported on 24 May 1964 at Enderby, in the south-central region of the province. Through 1997, there were 16 additional occurrences totaling at least 33 individual sightings which included extended stays. While cataloguing

the personal collection of the late Glenn R. Ryder, (Campbell and Henderson 2013) I came across a well-documented record of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher that Glenn had not transcribed from his pocket notebook to foolscap sheets for archiving. The following description is verbatim from Glenn's notes:

August 18, 1954 – To-day I seen a strange Bird feeding over farmlands at or near the Serpentine River on



Figure 1. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is a spectacular and distinctive passerine that is unlikely to be confused with any other regular North American species. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson.*

west side of 168 st. south of 96 Ave. [Surrey]. Bird was flying low to the ground and above shrubs.

It is a showy species, that I thought likely was some ones pet Bird that had escaped. This Birds field Description a flycatcher type of Bird with a long scissor-like tail that is open during flight. tail colours are Black and white. This is a male bird and in flight the under sides of It's wings show a Bright Salmon Pink. also the lower Belly and side. the head is white with a Dark eye and Bill and upper Breast white. The back is pale gray. wings are Black with white trim on

some feathers. like the secondaries feathers It also has wing Bars that show little white Trim. Dark or Black Legs. Bird stayed in area feeding for some time maybe one half hour. It was then seen flying off towards the s/east crossing over Cat Meridian or 168 st.

Scissor-tailed flycatcher (1) – *Muscivora forficata*. Length 11 to 16 inches. P.A. Taverner Birds of Canada 1934 Mentions this Bird as being recorded in Southern Manitoba.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is a short-distant migrant that commonly breeds in the south-central

Table 1. Seasonal range and number of individual monthly records, including consecutive days observed (in parenthesis), for Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in the Pacific Northwest states (Idaho, Oregon and Washington) and British Columbia, 1954 to 1997.

Monthly Occurrence and Total Records ¹									
	Range of Dates	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
Idaho ²	May 24 to Aug 16	1(2)	1(1)	1(1)	1(3)	-	-	-	4(7)
Oregon ³	May 7 to Nov 20	4(4)	3(3)	1(1)	-	2(2)	-	2(11)	12(21)
Washington ⁴	May 5 to Sep 4	1(1)	-	1(1)	-	1(1)	-	-	3(3)
British Columbia ⁵	May 13 to Oct 10	5(8)	6(16)	2(2)	2(2)	1(8)	1(14)	-	17(50)
Total		11(15)	10(20)	5(5)	3(5)	4(11)	1(14)	2(11)	36(81)

¹A record is considered a daily occurrence, including extended stays.

²Idaho birds online at [https://idaho.birds.nest/distribution maps/tyrant-flycatchers.../scissor-tailed flycatcher/](https://idaho.birds.nest/distribution%20maps/tyrant-flycatchers.../scissor-tailed%20flycatcher/).

³Nehls (2003).

⁴Mlodinow (2005).

⁵Campbell et al. (1997)

United States and northeastern Mexico and winters mainly from southern Mexico through central Costa Rica, rarely to western Panama. It wanders regularly as a vagrant throughout eastern and western North America (Regosin 1998). In California, the flycatcher has been recorded in every month and is considered a very rare spring transient there, mainly from mid-May through June (Small 1994). Elsewhere in the west, it is a recurrent straggler north through Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and much of British Columbia to southeastern Alaska (Roberson 1980, Regosin 1998).

A similar pattern of widespread dispersal occurs in the Pacific Northwest where sightings of the species

are more unpredictable and casual. Through 1997, there were four occurrences (7 records) in Idaho, 12 occurrences (21 records) in Oregon, 3 occurrences (3 records) in Washington, and 17 occurrences (50 records) in British Columbia (Table 1). Most occurrences for Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia are from early May to early July which is consistent with vagrant occurrences being less common in the autumn (Regosin 1998).

For the period discussed, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has been recorded in the Pacific Northwest from 5 May (Washington; Tweit and Paulson 1994) to 20 November (Oregon; Mlodinow 2005) and in British Columbia for the five-month period, 13 May

to 10 October (Table 1). All records are of single birds and most were seen only once. The longest period of residency was 18 days in extreme south-central British Columbia (Ron Walker pers. comm.).

The first record for Idaho is in 1955 (Thornburg 1956), for Oregon in 1966 (Crowell and Nehls 1966), for Washington in 1983 (Tweit and Paulson 1994), and for British Columbia in 1954 (this paper). Glenn's observation is a year earlier than the previous record for the Pacific Northwest. †

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