

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, juvenile How many? 1

Location? Approx 2 miles S Pleasant Creek S.P. LINN County

Type of Habitat? open hay field

When? date(s): 31 July 1995 time: 12:40 pm to 1:00 pm

Who? your name and address: DAVID L. DANKERT

Others with you: NONE

Others before or after you: NONE

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I was traveling north on Hollenbeck Rd which is a gravel road in NW Linn County. To my right I noticed a Goldfinch and a larger bird (about three times as large as the Goldfinch) perched on a telephone wire. I quickly turned my vehicle around and using my binos, with the sun behind me, I noticed a black bill, dark eye, dark brown to black wings. The bird was about 50 yds from me and 25 ft off the ground. The cheek, lores, forehead, nape of neck, throat, breast and belly appeared white to light gray. Coloring was uniform. The bird was looking downward. Tail was black and did not seem to be exceptionally long. Tail was held almost perpendicular to its perch. After approx. 5 mins a car drove past creating a cloud of dust and the bird took flight into a freshly cut hayfield. Driving up to the spot where it flew from its perch, I scanned to the west into the hayfield. About 10 mins elapsed and I relocated the bird. It was standing on loosely scattered hay about 60 yds from me. Again I noted how white this bird appeared! It stood motionless for about 30 to 40 seconds and then began to flycatch. Using its wings as a sort of net it was blocking and trapping insects in a cart wheeling motion never getting higher than 3 ft off the ground. Wing linings were white. Primary and secondary feathers of underwing were black. After its third flycatching attempt, it broke into full flight traveling north approx 8 ft above the ground. Tail was held parallel to the ground, a slight separation in outer tail feathers was observed. Rump was dark. Disappearing behind a farmstead, I got permission from the owners to search the area. As I was getting back into my vehicle after a 30 min search, I saw the bird fly into a large deciduous tree. Do to the ~~same~~ problems in searching a large tree coupled with strong winds, I did not find the bird.

Searching the area for about 2.5 hrs on 1 Aug and driving approx 10 miles of country roads during that time; I did not see the bird again.

Similar species; how eliminated: At first glance it looked like a shrike species but that was eliminated due to lack of black mask and absence of color on head. The bill on this bird was thin and had no hook at the end.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NO
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Bright and clear 50 to 70 yards - estimated Leica 8x42 BA binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: This is a life species for me

References and persons consulted before writing description: JEFF DANKERT
NGS: Birds of N. America, Golden Guide: Birds of N. America

How long before field notes made? 2.5 hrs this form completed? 1 day

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).