

Long Point Bird Observatory – Rarity Report

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Canadian Migration
Monitoring Network



Réseau canadien
de surveillance
des migrations



In order that any sight record or banding of a rare species can be confirmed for the historical record, it must be properly documented. LPBO cooperators are therefore asked to complete a form in every case where a rarity is being claimed. Guidance as to which species are considered rare in the Long Point area may be obtained from the LPBO Program Coordinator and in the Long Point Area Checklist found in *A Birding Guide to Long Point Area*. Each observer should prepare his/her description independently and preferably before consulting any field guides or other literature.

PLEASE PRINT.

Species claimed: Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savannah savannah*)

No. of birds: 1

Age: 'Second-year'; late first-cycle/early second-cycle

(From Peter Pyle – see below): "SY" (late first-cycle/early second-cycle/~one-year-old) male just beginning the PB2. The brown primary coverts appear to be juvenal feathers, contrasting with the replaced greater coverts and greater alula. I think it has undergone an eccentric PF, with p8-p10 (or p7-p10) replaced and p1-p6/p7 juvenal. A limit in the secondaries is harder to decipher but it may be between s2 and s3 (s1-s2 juvenal, s3-s7 formative). s8 and the replaced inner greater covert appear to represent the beginning of the PB2. The fact that s9 (both wings) and p1 or p1-p2 appear to be missing indicates this. Otherwise the tertial and covert may have been replaced during a PA1, but start of the PB2 seems more likely. The tail length also seems right for late second-cycle male. I can't tell from the images if the rects are juvenal or formative - could be either, as far as we know about molt in these. Rects are often (but not always) replaced during eccentric preformative molts.

Sex: Male - primary tip shape and tail length of 163.4 mm.

Date(s): April 17-18, 2012.

Place: Tip of Long Point

Time(s) of Observation: AM April 17 through PM April 18.

Who first saw the bird(s): Fernando Diaz

Who first identified it: Fernando Diaz

Other observers (names and addresses):

April 17 – Richard Dobbins, Matt Iles, Stu Mackenzie, Oliver Slessor, Mick Townsend, Ross Wood.

April 18 – Fernando Diaz, Richard Dobbins, Matt Iles, and Mick Townsend

c/o LPBO

Any who disagree: No

Your previous experience with the species: Observed in Central and South America.

Your previous experience with any closely similar species:

(a) Formerly:

(b) Same day:

Species present for comparison: Slate-colored Junco.

Which were beside it for comparison: Slate-colored Junco

Distance from observer(s): 0-20m

How measured: Estimate and in-hand.

Optical aids used: Eyes.

Weather conditions (at time of observation): NW – Beaufort 3, 10° C

Visibility: 30 + km

Cloud Cover: 5/10

Lighting: bright

Wind direction and speed:

Weather system preceding the date of observation (if known): Significant warm front early April.

Attach weather map clipping from local or national newspaper if relevant.

Associated movements of other species:

Was the bird trapped: Yes

Band # if banded: 2431-91633 – Wing= 106mm (worn), Tail = 163.4mm (worn), Weight = 31.4g, Fat = 1.

Was it photographed: Yes

If yes, by whom (name and address): All observers. Photos by Stu Mackenzie and Mick Townsend enclosed.

Specimen or parts preserved: No

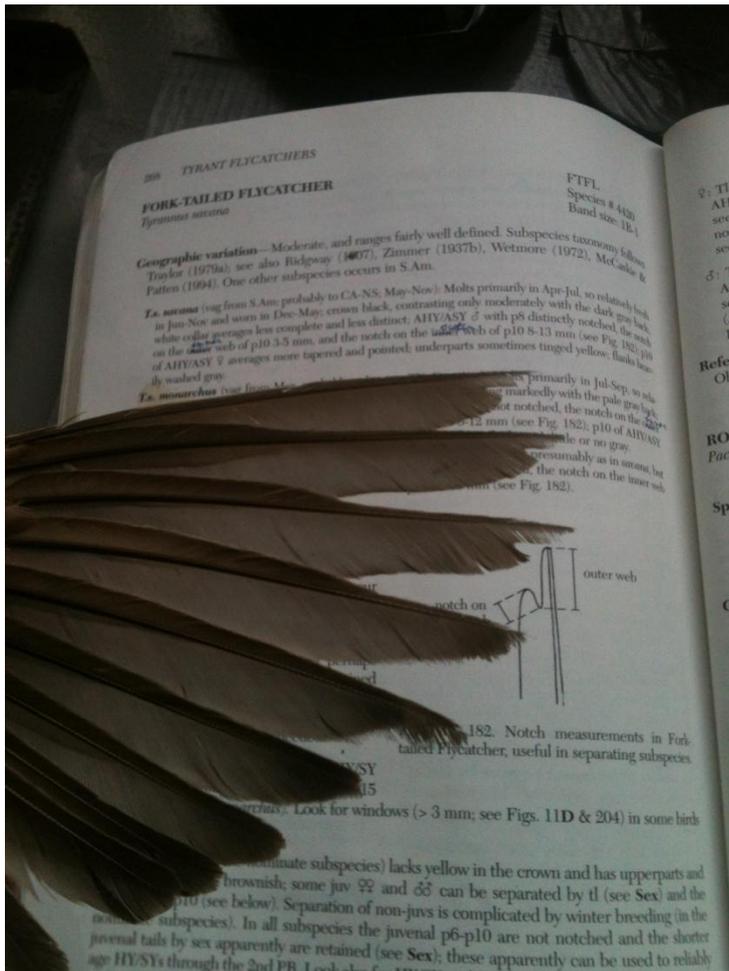
Present location:

Circumstances:

On the morning of April 17 around 0900, Fernando Diaz (Chile) observed a large black and white flycatcher flying west along the north shore of Long Point just west of the Lighthouse where he lost track of it. He suggested that it was probably a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, but didn't get a great look at it. At around 1400, Oliver ran back to the Tip house from the Tip exclaiming that the Fork-tailed Flycatcher was back near the Heligoland Trap! We all dropped what we were doing, Ross nearly fell off the water tower, and we ran to the Tip. The bird was hawking insects near the Heligoland trap and worked around almost the entire Tip in the couple hours we watched it. It frequented the low-lying willows and *Phragmites* where insects were more abundant. At 1730 it passively made it's way into Net 4 near the Tip of Long Point to Oliver and Fernando's surprise. It was banded by Fernando and released at 1750. The bird was observed in the same location on the morning of April 18, and for the last time on the afternoon of April 18.

Description:

Give separate description for (a) in the field (b) in the hand. Include full measurements and wing formula with hand descriptions.



Picture 1. Showing primary shape indicating probable male. Stu Mackenzie.



Picture 2. Showing extremely worn first basic flight feathers, possibly juvenal pp covs, and replaced S_{9,8} and inner greater coverts. Stu Mackenzie



Picture 3. Showing extremely worn outer rectrices. Stu Mackenzie



Picture 4. Flycatcher at rest April 17. Mick Townsend.

Did you refer to any guides/other literature: Pyle (1997), Howell (2010)

(a) at the time: Pyle (1997), Howell (2010)

(b) afterwards: Pyle (1997), Howell (2010)

Finally, is this record 100% certain? Yes

Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stuart Mackenzie".

E-mail A _____ **nada.org**

Date: January 17, 2013.

Mailing Address: c/o LPBO

Appendix 1. Emails from Alex Jahn (Departamento de Ecología, Genética y Evolución, Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales, Universidad de Buenos Aires) and Peter Pyle (Institute for Bird Populations), and Alvaro Jaramillo (Alvaro's Adventures).

Alex Jahn:

Hi Stu,

Wow, quite a catch, congrats! It appears to me to be AHY...I can't say whether ASY or not.

Looking at the feathers on its back, it looks to me like *T. s. savana*. Subspecies *monachus* is has a paler color, although apparently very worn plumage on individuals of the nominate subspecies can look like *monachus* (see attached .pdf). If you got a good look at around its neck, *monachus* has a lot more white there than subspp. *savana*, though again there appears to be dispute on this (see attached). Apparently, the best way to separate the two subspp. is by the notch on the outer three primaries, which is much more emarginated in the nominate subspp. The notches on primaries 8-10 in your picture look as deep as those we catch in Argentina (subspp. *savana*), see attached fotos of male vs. female primaries in Argentina. So it looks like the nominate subspp.

The notches suggest a male, but the tail length seems somewhat short, though the tails of males can be at times. Is it very worn perhaps? If not, maybe it is a younger bird, as tail length apparently gets longer with age in males.

In any case, my best guess is an AHY male of the nominate subspp. Apparently, your catch is one of the earliest on record, as most seem to be in fall (see attached). He probably overshot his winter range in northern South America (the nominate subspp. migrates northwards from Feb to April to spend austral winter in n. South America).

All the best and thanks for sharing,
Alex

Alex Jahn
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Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales
Universidad de Buenos Aires
Buenos Aires, Argentina
www.biology.ufl.edu/centers/AvesInternacionales/English/Overview.html

Peter Pyle:

Hi Stuart -

I'd go with "SY" (late first-cycle/early second-cycle/~one-year-old) male just beginning the PB2. The brown primary coverts appear to be juvenal feathers, contrasting with the replaced greater coverts and greater alula. I think it has undergone an eccentric PF, with p8-p10 (or p7-p10) replaced and p1-p6/p7 juvenal. A limit in the secondaries is harder to decipher but it may be between s2 and s3 (s1-s2 juvenal, s3-s7 formative). s8 and the replaced inner greater covert appear to represent the beginning of the PB2. The fact that s9 (both wings) and p1 or p1-p2 appear to be missing indicates this. Otherwise the tertial and covert may have been replaced during a PA1, but start of the PB2 seems more likely. The tail length also seems right for late second-cycle male. I can't tell from the images if the rects are juvenal or formative - could be either, as far as we know about molt in these. Rects are often (but not always) replaced during eccentric preformative molts.

As for subspecies I'll leave that to others, but nothing would appear to be inconsistent with savanna, which should probably be presumed since this is the subspecies most often documented in North America.

Hope this helps. I almost did not include FTFL in Part 1 but did so in the end, simply because it's a cool bird with a lot going on, and for times like this...cheers,

Peter

Alvaro Jaramillo:

Stuart

Nice one! I am no expert on Fork-tailed Flycatcher so I may have this wrong. However, the hatch year/second year thing becomes problematic in southern hemisphere species. Thinking of the Austral migratory population: Essentially a youngster (hatched last season) would have fledged between December – March, with most likely fledging in February. They are therefore not that old at this time of year. From a wear state alone I think this bird has to be older than that. The fact that it has obvious notches would also eliminate this bird being one with retained Juv flight feathers, and if the feathers were new there that would be obvious since they would only be a few weeks old. So this bird is older than first cycle from my estimation assuming a southern population. I have no idea if second cycle birds retain feathers in a manner that would allow that age to be differentiated. I don't have an idea how that tail length measures within the distribution for males or females, but if it is a big ass long flowing tail – then it is a male! Female tails are not only shorter, because of their length they also act stiffer, not flowing in the breeze as much as in a male. Given the state of the wings I assume that the bird also has a rather worn tail, so when fresh it was likely longer than it is now.

Sorry I cannot be not more helpful.

Alvaro

Alvaro Jaramillo

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