

Napa Solano Audubon's Rare Bird Alert #12 Eastern Kingbird 9-6-22

Greetings Napa-Solano Audubon Members, Family & Friends:

Periodically, we will send out Rare Birding Alerts of uncommon or rare species that have been seen in our area. This report features the Eastern Kingbird that has been recently spotted in several locations around the Bay Area.



Eastern Kingbird Bodega Bay 9-2-22 by Mark & Lucas Stephenson

Location: A few Eastern Kingbirds have recently been spotted in the last week or so throughout the Bay Area. This is the time of year that they may migrate through Northern California on their way to their wintering grounds in Central and South America.

Lucas and I refound this one that was originally spotted by Jackie Sones, the Field Manager for UC Davis' Marine Biology Lab (located near Bodega Head) in the grassy and bush lupine-dotted fields adjacent to the Lab. Another was seen last week at Point Reyes' on the Outer Point that has currently shifted to the Spaletta Ranch, a 3rd was found at Point Pinole Regional Park in Contra Costa County yesterday, and yet another at Point Bonita in the Marin Headlands.



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Identification: Eastern Kingbirds are aerial-hawking, insectivore Tyrannus flycatchers of open spaces of Eastern North America. They are the only Tyrannus Flycatcher breeding East of the Mississippi. However, they have the largest range which extends west of the Mississippi, through the mid-west and occasionally as

far West as Eastern Oregon and Washington. There have been only a few known breeding records in California. The first was by Rich Stallcup who found a nest along the shores of Honey Lake. Lucas and I visited another known location along the shores of Blue Lake in Lassen County in mid-July 2018, and were treated to 4 noisy young getting ready to fledge. Like other Tyrannus Flycatchers they are aggressive defenders of their breeding territories and will chase any other kingbirds away. They prefer to nest near water and often locate their nest in a tree only a few feet above a lake or pond. Their namesake "Tyrannus" comes from the Greek word for Tyrant, Ruler, or King. They are easily identified by their black head, face, back, wings, and under tail, contrasting sharply with their white throat, breast and vent. Their tail is tipped in white as if it was dipped in a paint bucket, and there are white edgings to their wing coverts that almost resemble wing bars from a distance.

The Eastern Kingbird's Western Cousins include our common grassland Western Kingbird, Southern California's Cassin's Kingbird, along with Arizona's Tropical Kingbirds that occasionally visit our Northern California's coast sporadically during the late Fall. You might remember we had Napa's 1st record of a Tropical Kingbird over-wintering last year at the diRosa Center for Contemporary Art along the Sonoma Highway (Rare Bird Alert #11). Tropical Kingbirds look very similar to Western Kingbirds, but the bright yellow breast extends higher up almost to the throat and lower throughout the vent. Their back is a slightly paler greenish-brown, which color extends into their tail. The Western's throat and upper breast are pale gray and their vent feathers are white. The Western's green back and dark brown wings are very similar to the Tropical's, but their tail is nearly black, and their outermost rectrices, or tail feathers, are edged in white which are visible in flight.



Western Kingbird Salton Sea by Mark & Lucas Stephenson



Tropical Kingbird Costa Rica 4-17-19 by Mark & Lucas Stephenson



Tropical Kingbird Point Arena 11-3-19 by Mark & Lucas Stephenson



Cassin's Kingbird Long Beach, CA 1-22-19 by Mark & Lucas Stephenson



Eastern Kingbird Blue Lake, CA 7-11-18 by Mark & Lucas Stephenson



Eastern Kingbird Nest w Fledglings Blue Lake, CA 7-11-18 by Mark & Lucas Stephenson

Happy Birding,

Mark