

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage): 1
3. Locality: Cameron Parish
Specific Locality: Willow Island
4. Date(s) when observed: 12/08/2019
5. Time(s) of day when observed: about 8:48 to about 9:14 a.m.
6. Reporting observer and address: Paul Conover, Lafayette, LA
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): Phillip Wallace, Dave Patton
8. Other observers who *independently identified* the bird(s):
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light):
Sunny, for most of the sighting in our favor.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): 10x Zeiss
11. Distance to bird(s): I was probably at about 30 yards at closest when the bird was perched up in the sun. Phillip was much closer, and Dave I think was intermediate in position. Earlier I was closer to the bird, but the bird was obscured except to genus in a branchy tree.
12. Duration of observation: Observations took place in increments throughout the sighting. The bird appeared, flew off, reappeared, and repeated. Probably sightings of 1 minute, 2, minutes, 3 minutes.
13. Habitat: Remnant chenier oak grove on the edge of marsh and pasture.
14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation: The bird came in, perched in a few spots in one area, flew off, then was relocated on a tall snag. The bird disappeared again, and I went off to look in the direction it had gone. I thought the belly color was too bright and the breast color too dark for typical ATFL, and that the head was not as laterally compressed or delicate as ATFL. The bill also seemed thicker and less angular than ATFL. Phillip called out that the bird had returned to the south end of the grove, so I went over. The bird was perched in an area where I had a clear view, but was too distant to see important details or get useful photos. Phillip and Dave seemed to be in good position for their big lenses to get pictures, and I didn't want to spook the bird, so I stayed put and hoped their pictures would capture diagnostic details. I was also playing BCFL and ATFL calls to try to elicit responses. Phillip heard a call which he thought indicated ATFL, then the bird flew from the immediate area. I dismissed my impressions and added the bird as ATFL to the checklist. The next day Dave sent out photos including the bird with its tail spread and the rectrix pattern visible, and was excited to see that the pattern was clearly that of a BCFL. I forwarded the photos without comment to Steve Cardiff and David Muth, both of whom have wide experience with the genus, and Steve independently stated that it was BCFL.
15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species, body bulk, shape, proportions, bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species):

Myiarchus flycatcher with the nearly default details of that genus: yellow belly, grayish breast, throat and chin, bushy brown crest, brownish back with whitish edges to tertiaries, coverts, and secondaries, reddish in primaries, and pointed black bill.

In terms of specific differences between this species, ATFL, and GCFL, this bird seemed to have a deeper pale lemon belly than ATFL, the gray of the breast seemed less ashy than on ATFL and seemed to contrast more sharply with the belly than on ATFL. In the latter regard this bird seemed intermediate between ATFL and GCFL, but was obviously not as dark at the juncture of breast and belly as GCFL.

The gray of the throat seemed less ashy than on ATFL as well, and didn't seem to extend so broadly onto the sides of the neck and the nape as ATFL's can. The crown seemed a richer brown than ATFL as well.

The bird seemed more robust in build than ATFL, with a subtly more massive head. The head seemed less laterally compressed at the eyes than ATFL, which I think of having a skinny head, and the head seemed blockier. Those impressions may have been based on posture, however, so I considered them suggestions rather than diagnostic marks in the field.

The bill seemed less angular and straight-sided, more swollen and thicker than on ATFL, although that impression is probably subject to some degree to feather wear around the bill, and individual variation.

What I saw in the field gave me a good impression of the bird's ID, but I hoped that Dave and Phillip with their superior lenses would be able to confirm diagnostically my impressions.

Upon examining Dave's photos, the rectrices appeared to show the BCFL pattern fairly clearly, with the outer rectrix being rufous on the inner web, and the outer web darker brown, but the brown expanding broadly across the feather shaft onto the inner web and running parallel with the shaft with no flaring at the feather tip as in ATFL. That picture was a bit blurry as it was an action shot, but Phillip's photos of the folded tail shows in great clarity that this pattern is actual, and diagnostic to species, BCFL.

16. Voice: I didn't hear this bird. Phillip heard what he described as a pip call, which he considered like ATFL and unlike the rising call of BCFL. Perhaps the call was a partial or was an incidental sound this individual bird made. The possibility exists, as has happened numerous times with this genus, that another Myiarchus was nearby.

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

The expansion of the brown of the outer rectrix broadly onto the inner web for over half of the feather is diagnostic for BCFL. GCFL follows the shaft with perhaps a little overspill onto the inner web, but not as much as this bird shows. ATFL has the flaring hook or J pattern near the rectrix tip which this bird lacked. I've been fooled by an ATFL with worn feathers and the J worn off before, but I don't believe the brown of ATFL can extend across the shaft so broadly for the majority of the length of the rectrix. The Birds of North America account for ATFL states that the bleed-over of darker brown from the outer web on the outer rectrix to where the J begins to flare starts toward the distal end of the feather, but I'd like to check that statement against specimens. Certainly Pyle and the authors Pyle drew from state that pattern seen on this bird is diagnostic for BCFL, and I think that has to be correct.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Yes. I took only 4 pictures as the bird was beyond the useful range of my lens, but Phillip and Dave have much better lenses and were closer, and I urged them to take as many photos as possible, noting that even folded tail shots should yield an ID. Their photos will be on their reports.

19. Previous experience with this species: I've had some experience over the years, but most importantly I saw many individuals of this species in Arizona last June, including side-by-side comparisons with ATFL and

DCFL. I have extensive experience with GCFL every breeding season.

20. This description is written mainly from memory, from observations I verbalized in the field to commit to memory. However, the diagnostic features were only confirmable from photos, so part of this description relies on photo review.

21. Are you positive of your identification if not, explain: Yes. I felt confident that given good enough looks in the field that this bird would prove to be a BCFL, but I thought I had erred when Phillip heard the vocalization and he considered it safely attributable to ATFL. On seeing the photos, my confidence is again 100%.

22. Date: 10 Dec 2019



