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TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

B3 CLASS

2025

TYRANNUS FLYCATCHERS
(KINGBIRDS)

“TYRANT” FLYCATHERS

Tyrant – despot, monarch,
absolute ruler

“Tyrant” – described by Catesby (1731)

“The courage of this little bird is singular. He pursues and puts to flight all kinds of birds that come near his station, from the smallest to the largest, none escaping his fury”.

Do Kings Play Chess
On Fine Green Silk

Order, Family, Genus, Species

Domain: **Eukarya**

Kingdom: **Animalia**

Phylum: **Chordata**

Class: **Aves**

Order: **Passeriformes**

Family: **Tyrannidae**

Contopus
(4)

Myiarchus
(6)

Tyrannus
(9)

Sayornis
(3)

Empidonax
(10)

Other genera

“Flycatchers”

Genus

HABIT o: WHO?
TAXONOMY
(THE TREE OF LIFE)

GENUS: TYRANNUS
13 SPECIES WORLD WIDE
9 SPECIES IN ABA & TEXAS

Eastern Kingbird

Gray Kingbird

Thick-billed Kingbird

Gray & Black Kingbirds

Western Kingbird

Cassin's Kingbird

Yellow-bellied Kingbirds

Couch's Kingbird

Tropical Kingbird

Long-tailed Kingbirds

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Fork-tailed Flycatcher

NAME	DISTRIBUTION
Giant kingbird	Cuba
Loggerhead kingbird	The Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and, very rarely, in the United States.
Snowy-throated kingbird	Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru
White-throated kingbird	Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, and in the Guianas of Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana

Eastern



Gray



Thick-billed



Gray & Black Kingbirds

Yellow-bellied Kingbirds



Western



Cassin's



Couch's



Tropical

All illustrations by David A. Sibley

Long-tailed Kingbirds



Scissor-tailed



Fork-tailed

EASTERN KINGBIRD

Tyrannus tyrannus



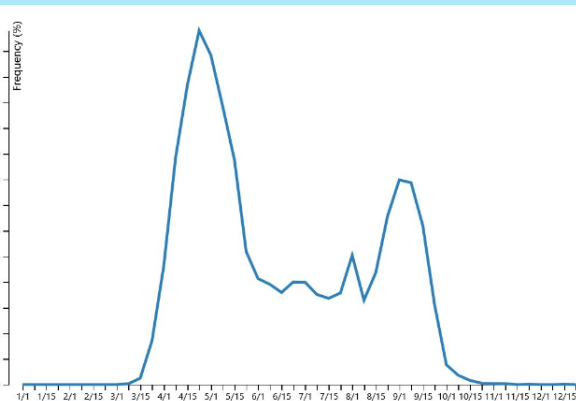
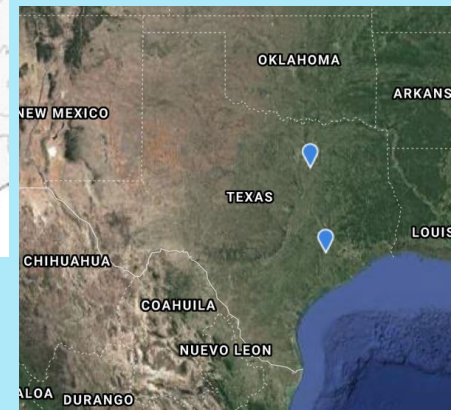
Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

HABIT 1,2: WHERE/WHEN

Eastern



Winter Sightings (Dec-Feb)



Eastern



HABIT 3: HABITAT



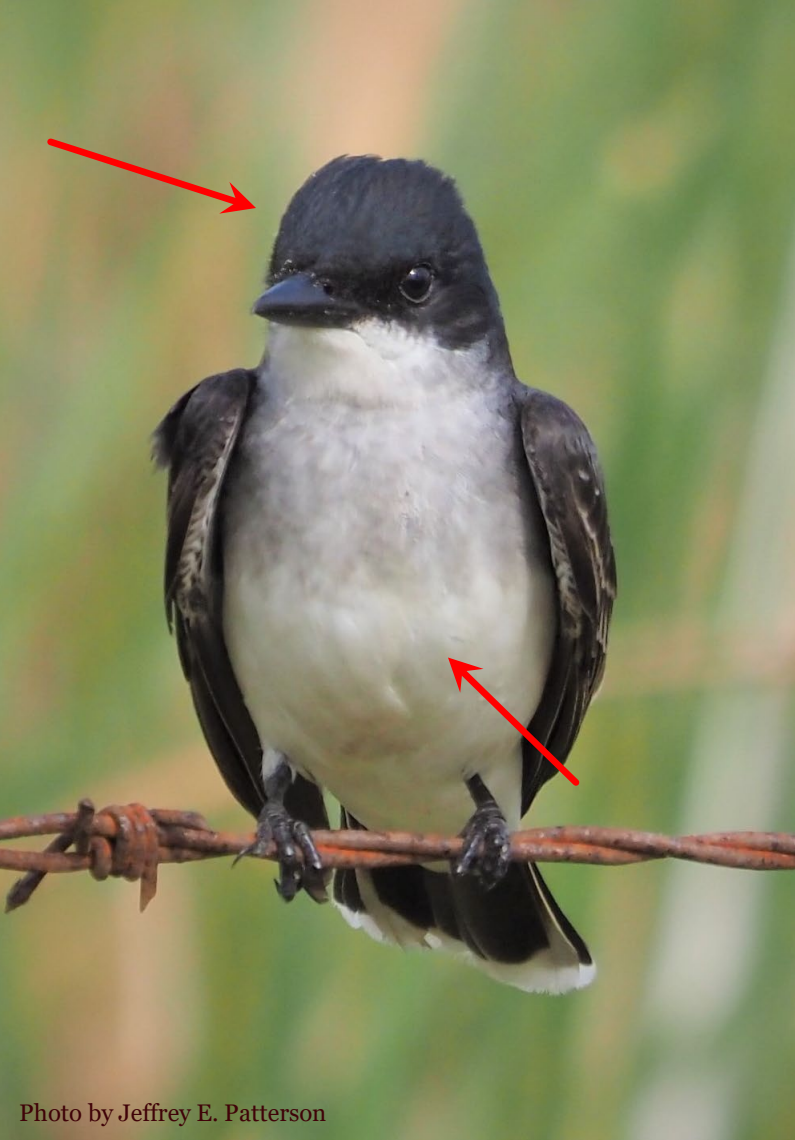
Semi-open habitats:

- yards
- fields
- pastures
- grasslands
- wetlands
- open areas near forest edges
- open areas near water

Eastern



Eastern



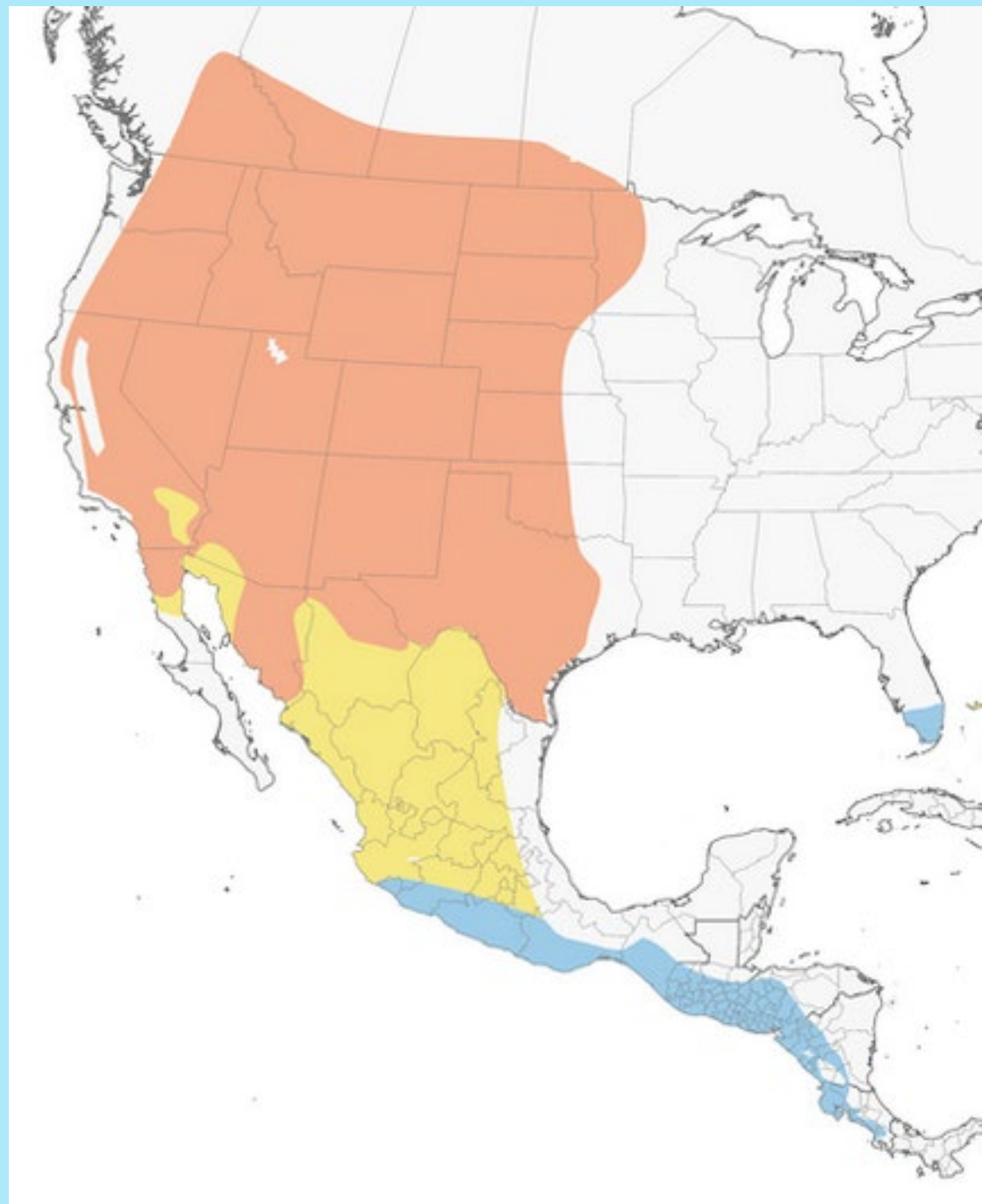
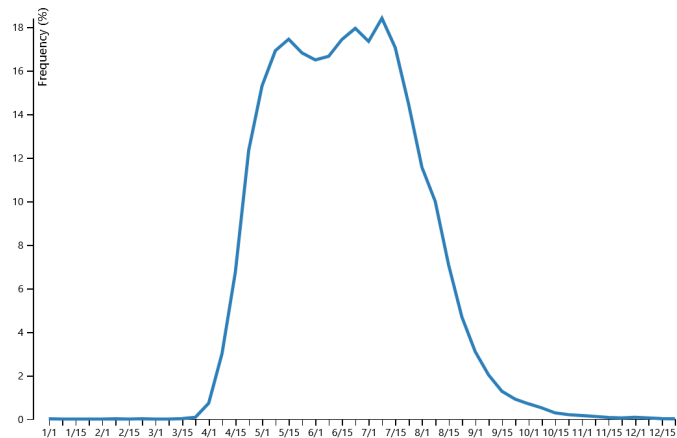
WESTERN KINGBIRD

Tyrannus verticalis

(located over the head,
vertically above)



Western



Western



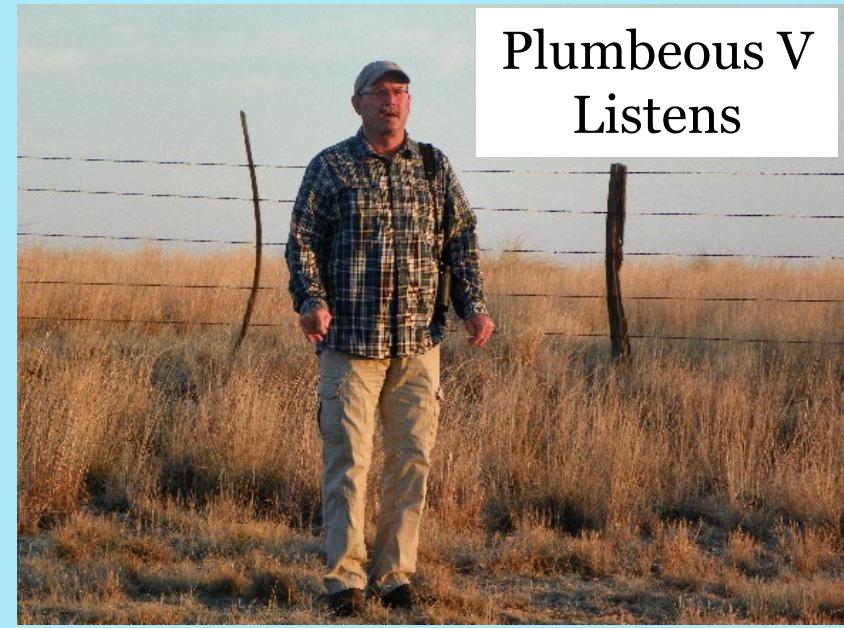
Western

Open habitats:

- Farms
- Prairies
- Roadsides
- Parking lots

Breeds in open terrain with trees

- Farmlands
- Groves
- Prairie streamside trees
- Semi-desert scrub



Plumbeous V
Listens

Western ID

Pale Western Kingbird

- **Default** yellow-bellied kingbird of dry open western places
- Less compact than Cassin's
- Nicely balanced proportions
- For a kingbird – smallish, narrow bill
- Generally pale & un-contrasting
- White throat “doesn't pop”
- Black tail with white sides

(critique this field mark)



Photo by Darren Clark

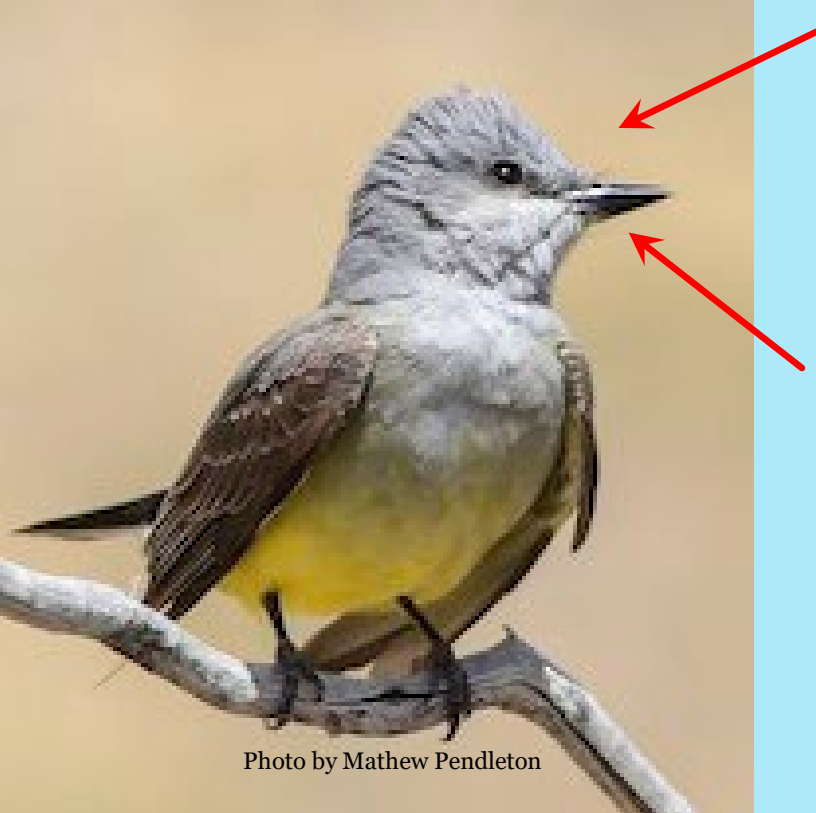


Photo by Mathew Pendleton



Western

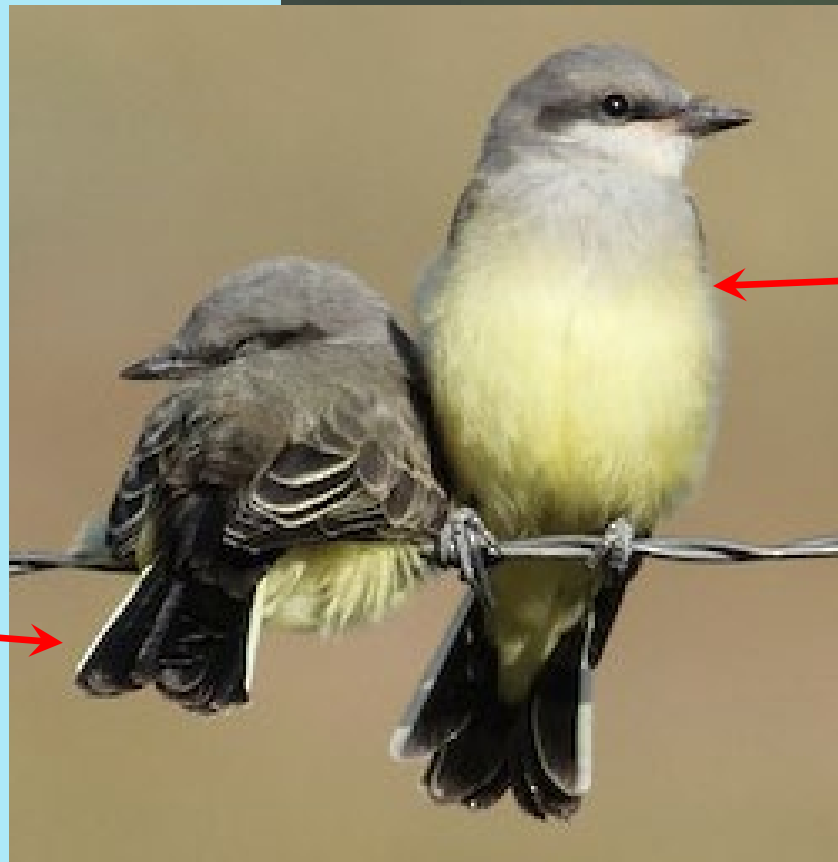


Photo by Charles Charlesworth

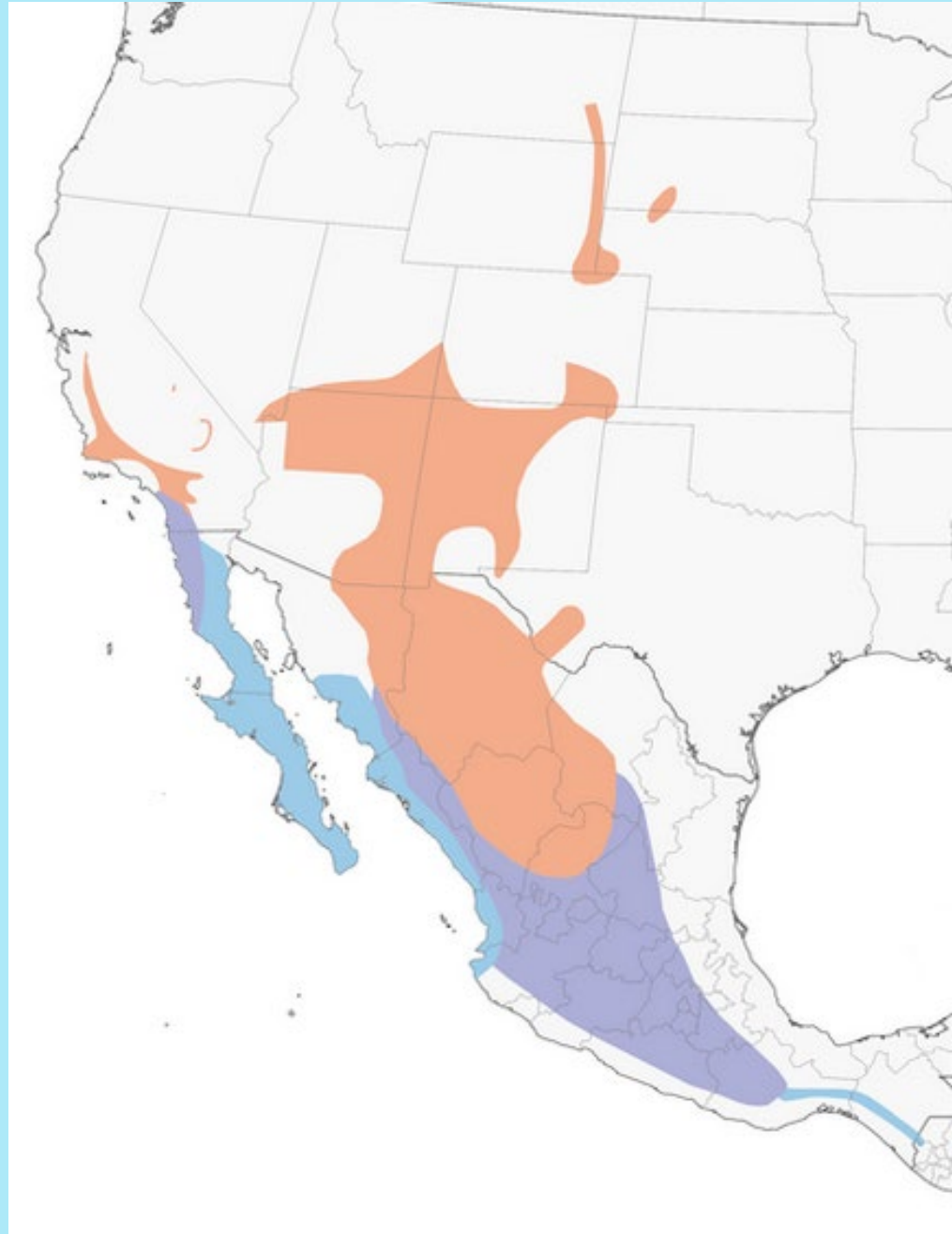
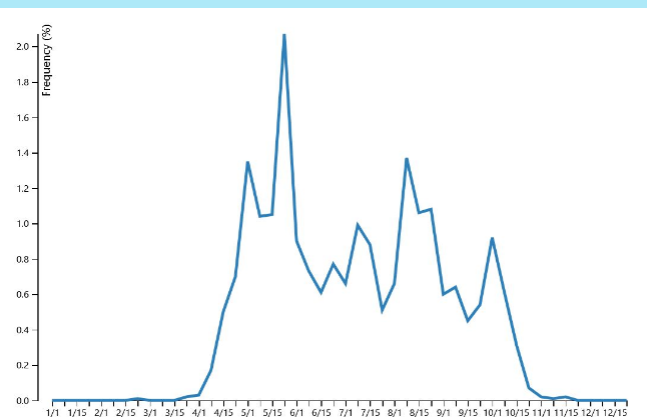
CASSIN'S

Tyrannus vociferans

shouting; clamorous



Cassin's



Cassin's

Cassin's



Cassin's

- Lightly wooded to grassy open areas
- Lowlands with scattered trees
- Desert scrub
- Agricultural areas
- Slightly more wooded areas than Western
- Cottonwood-edged rivers
- Canyons and foothills



Cassin's



Photo by Louis Hoeniger

Dark Western Kingbird

- Less common than Western
- Huskier, more compact, rounder-headed
- Strong contrast
- Dark head sets off white cheek & chin
- (White throat “pops”)
- Gray wash across breast



Photo by Brian Johnson

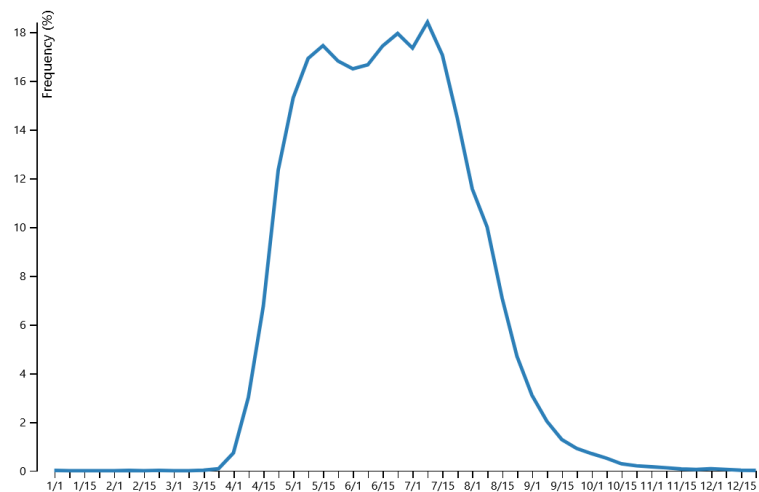
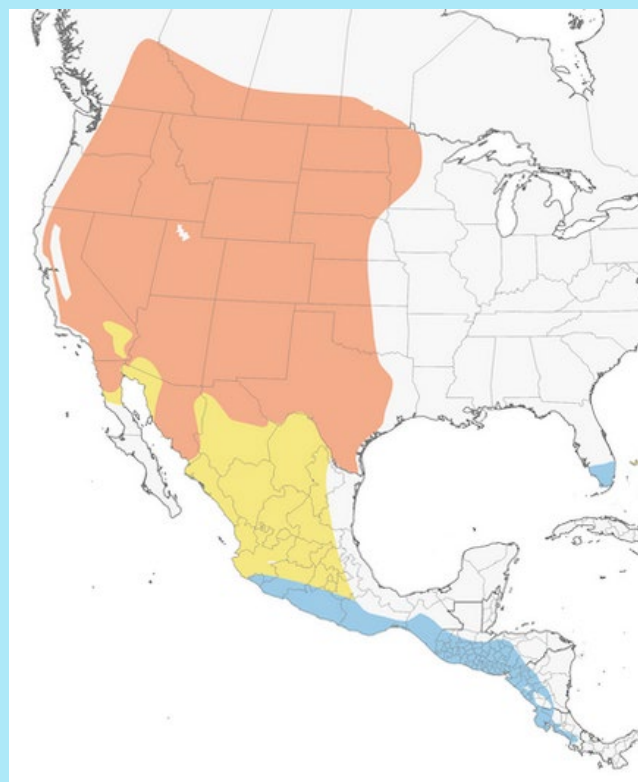
Cassin's



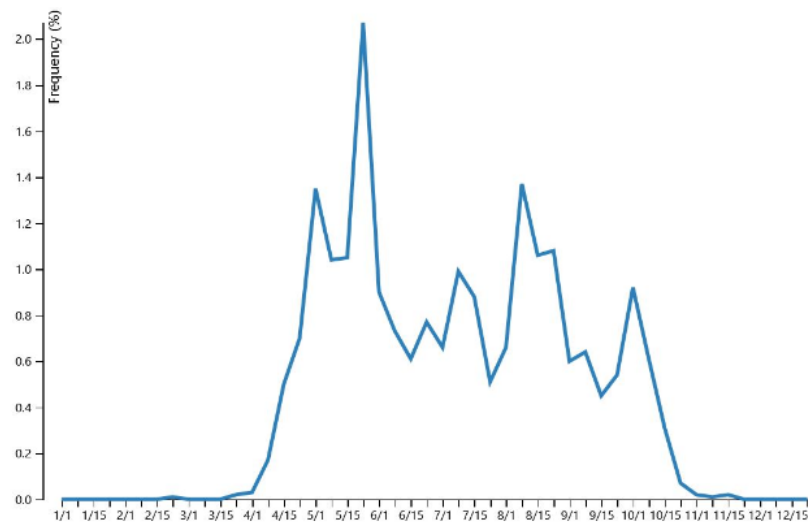
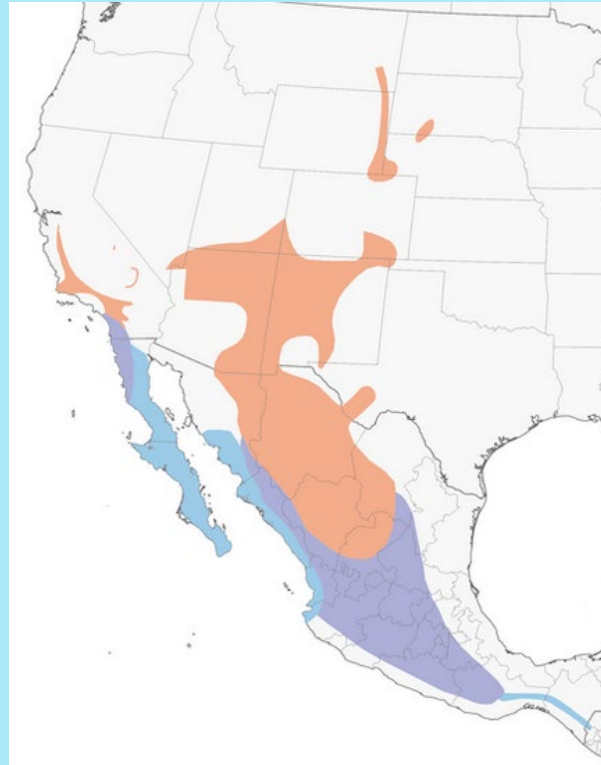
WESTERN
VS
CASSIN'S



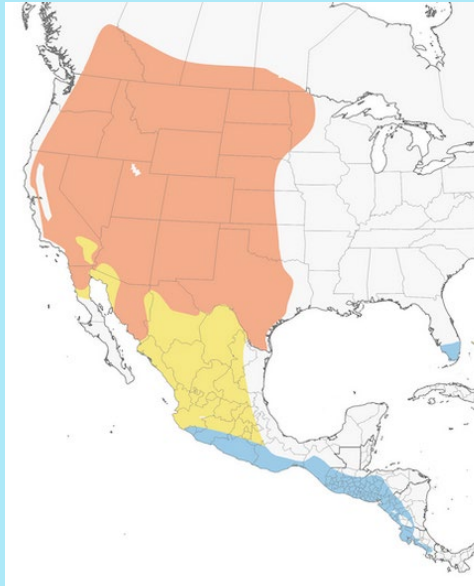
Western



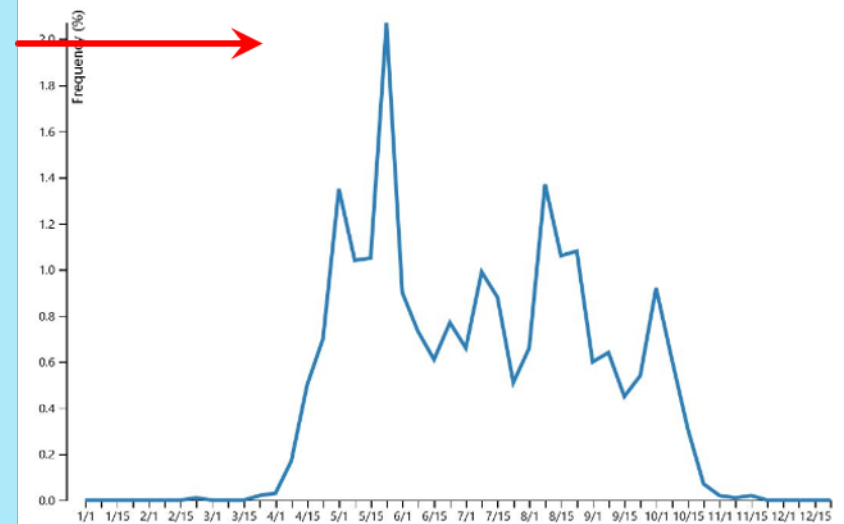
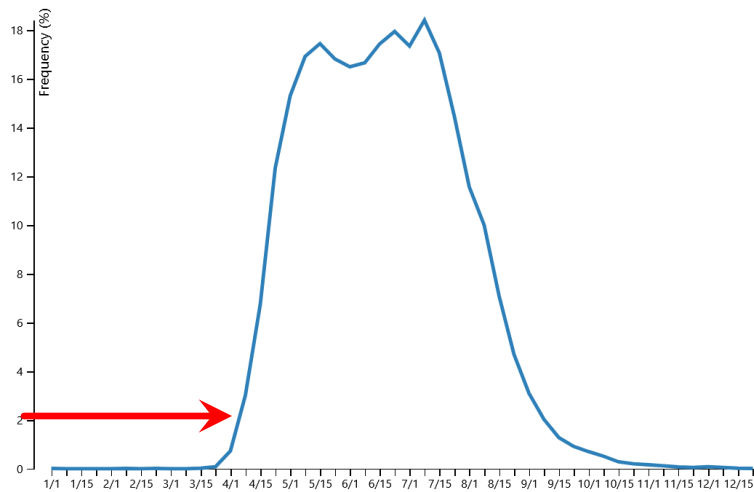
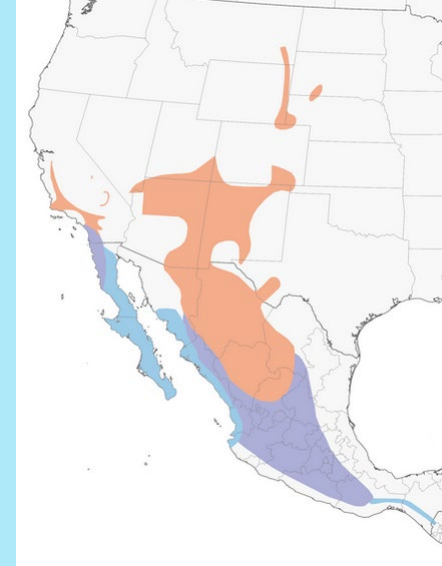
Cassin's



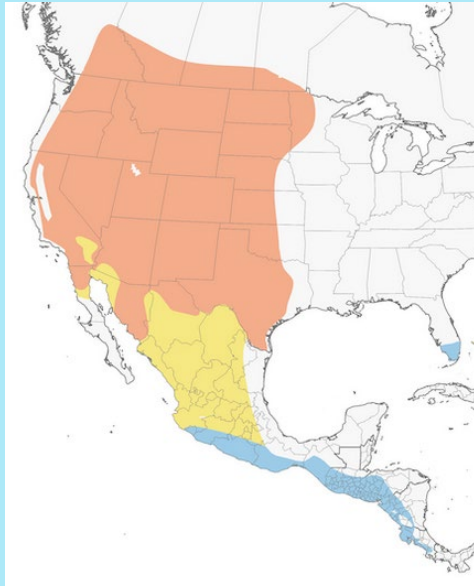
Western



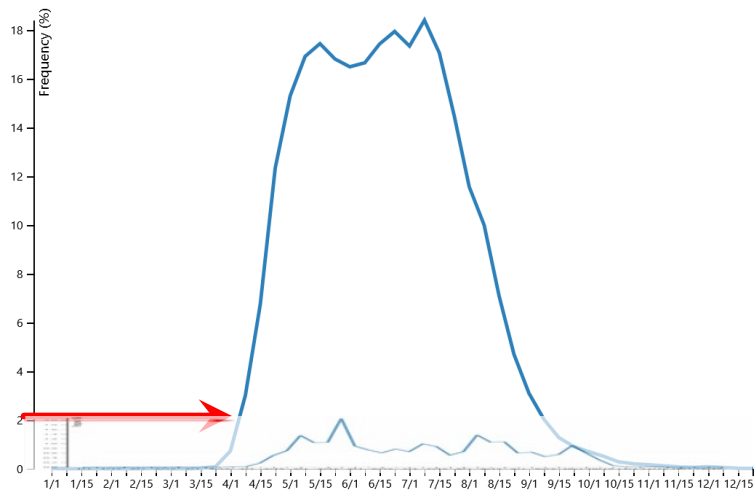
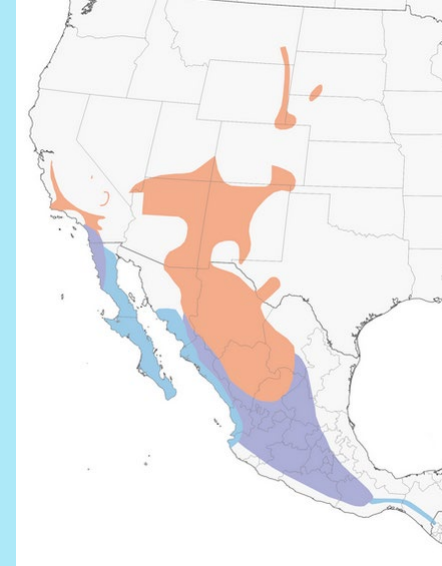
Cassin's

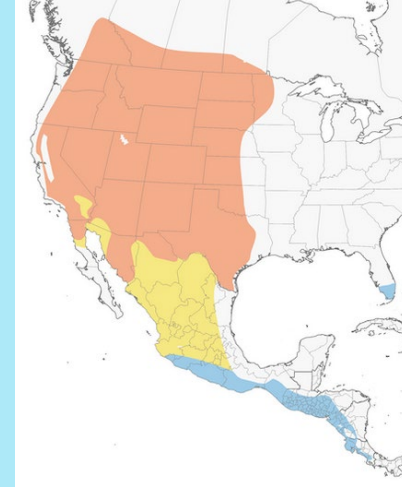
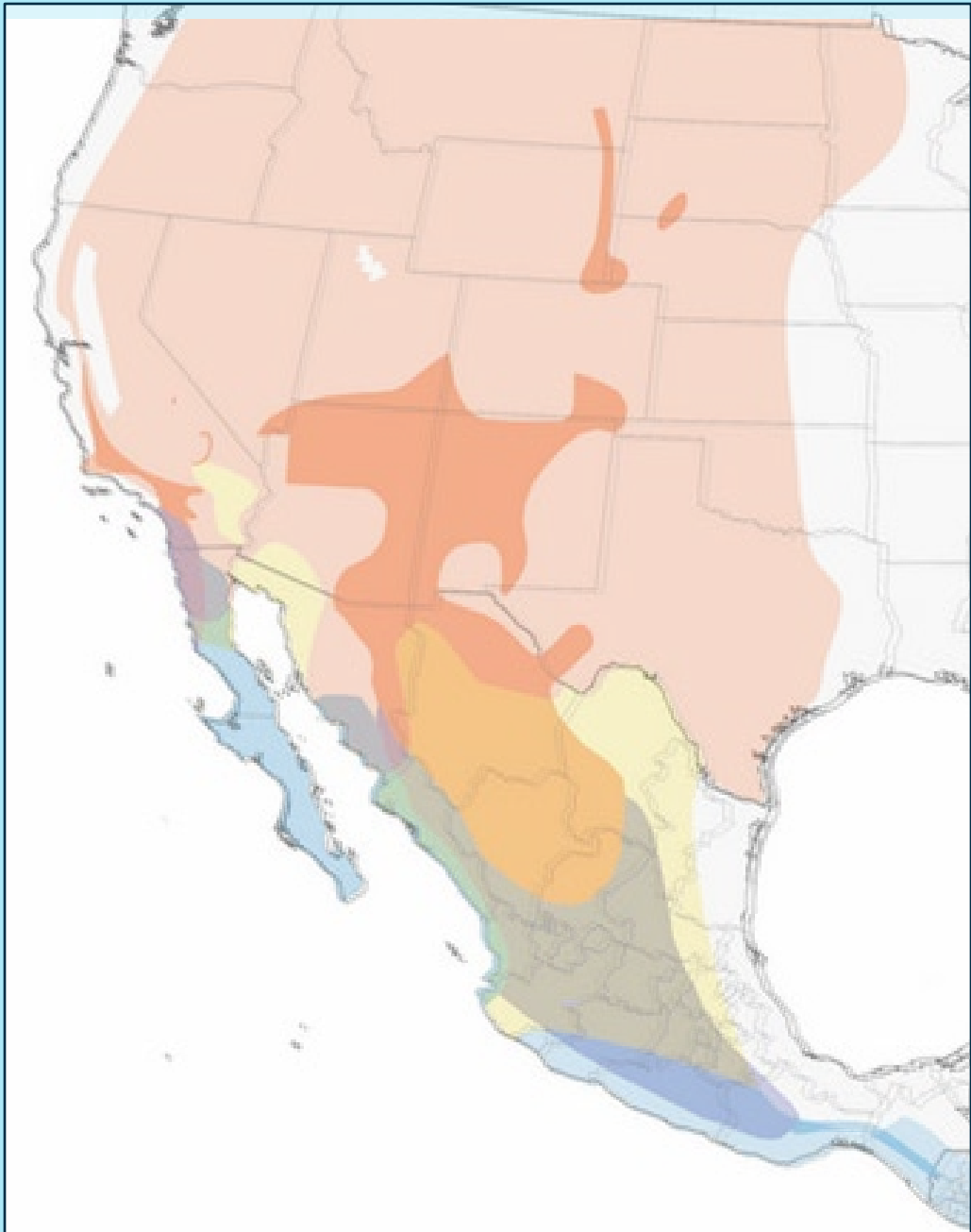


Western

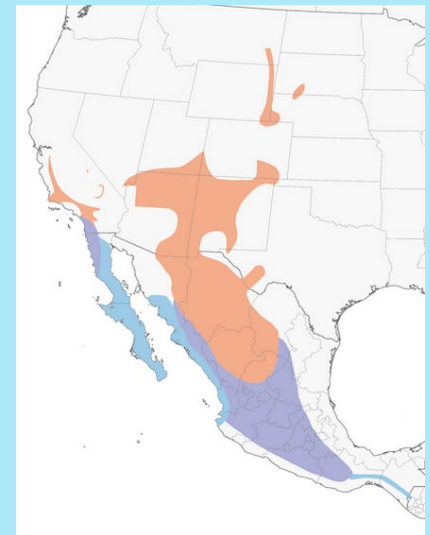


Cassin's





Western



Cassin's

JOHN CASSIN

1813-1869

- American ornithologist.
- Pennsylvania Quaker & businessman
- Unpaid curator, Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences
- Published several books (*Birds of California, Texas, Oregon, British and Russian America (~1850)*)
- Talented taxonomist
- Described 198 species
- Died of arsenic poisoning

Cassin's Kingbird

Cassin's Sparrow

Cassin's Vireo

Cassin's Finch

Cassin's Flycatcher

Cassin's Auklet

Cassin's Hawk-eagle

Cassin's Honeyguide

Western



Photo by Darren Clark

Cassin's



White ends
abruptly at eye

Darker
head & neck
contrast
with throat

Photo by Roger Clark

Western



Cassin's



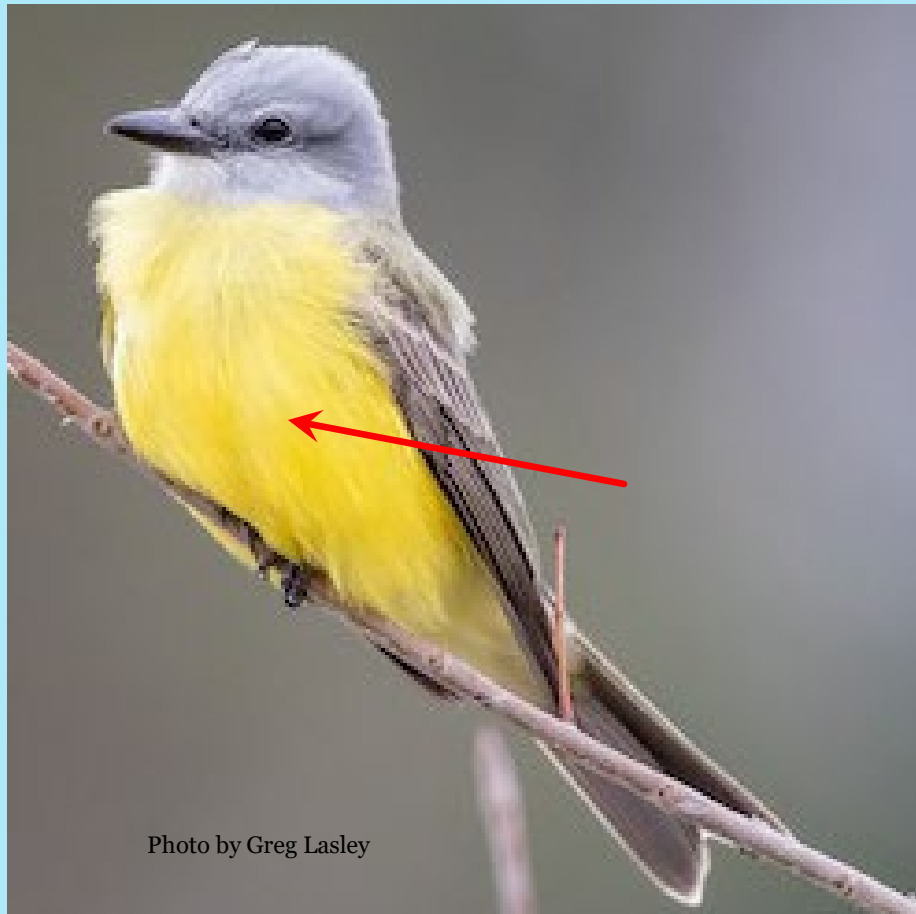
COUCH'S

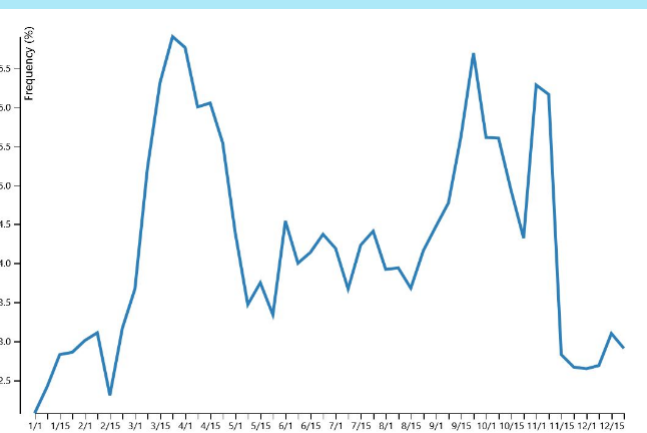
Tyrannus couchii

Named for
Major General Darius Nash Couch



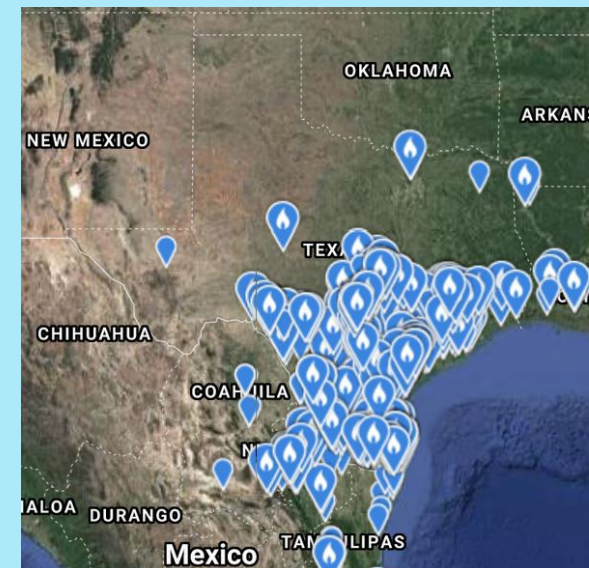
COUCH'S THE TEXAS KINGBIRD





Couch's

Winter Sightings (Dec-Feb)



Couch's



HABIT 3 WHERE?

HABITAT & MICRO-HABITAT

- Woodland edges
- Taller scattered trees or groups of trees:
- Riparian corridors
- Fruit groves
- Forest clearings
- Well-treed suburban areas



Couch's

Couch's

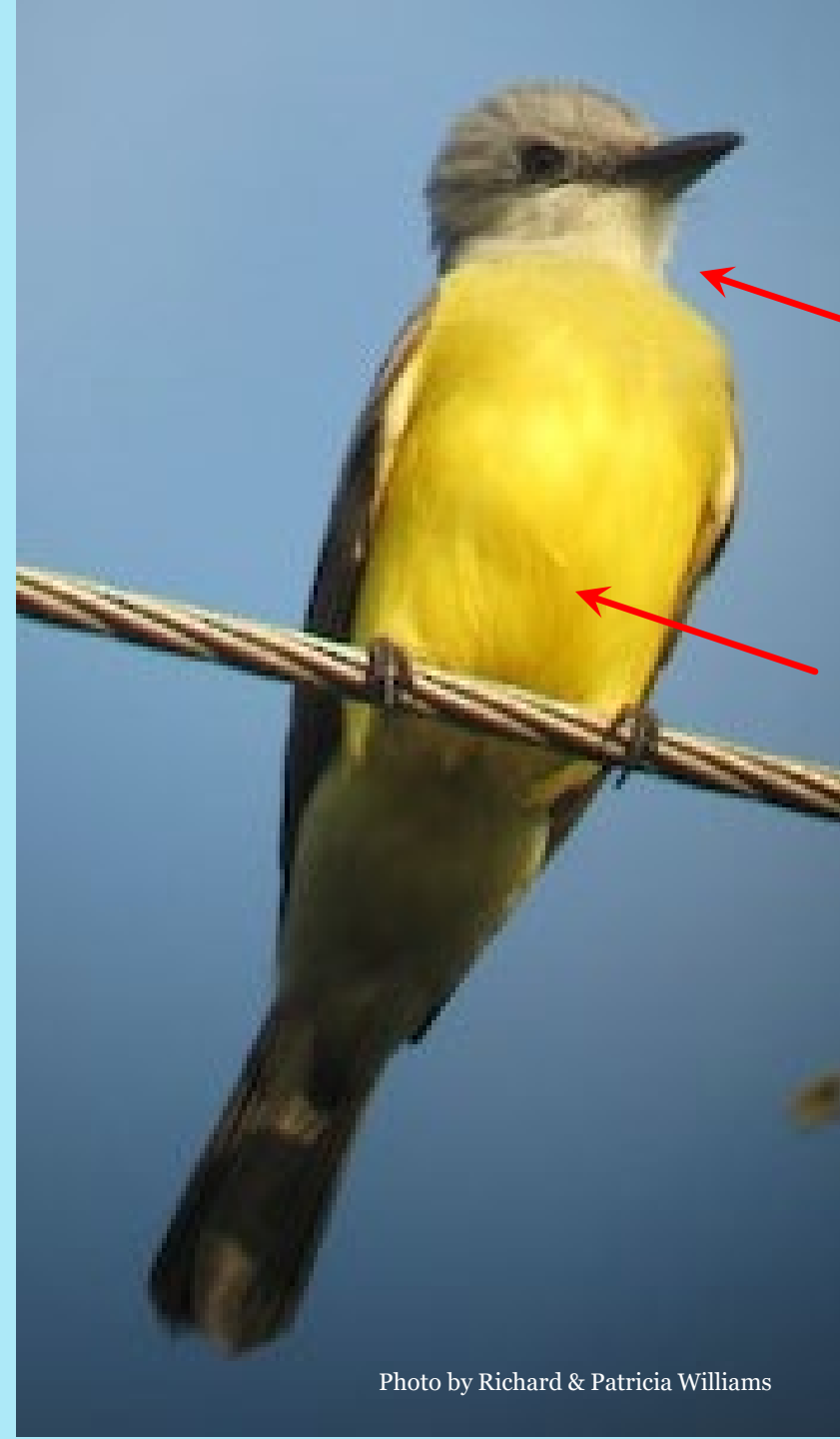


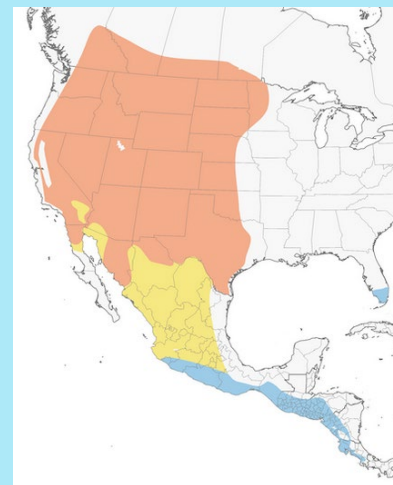
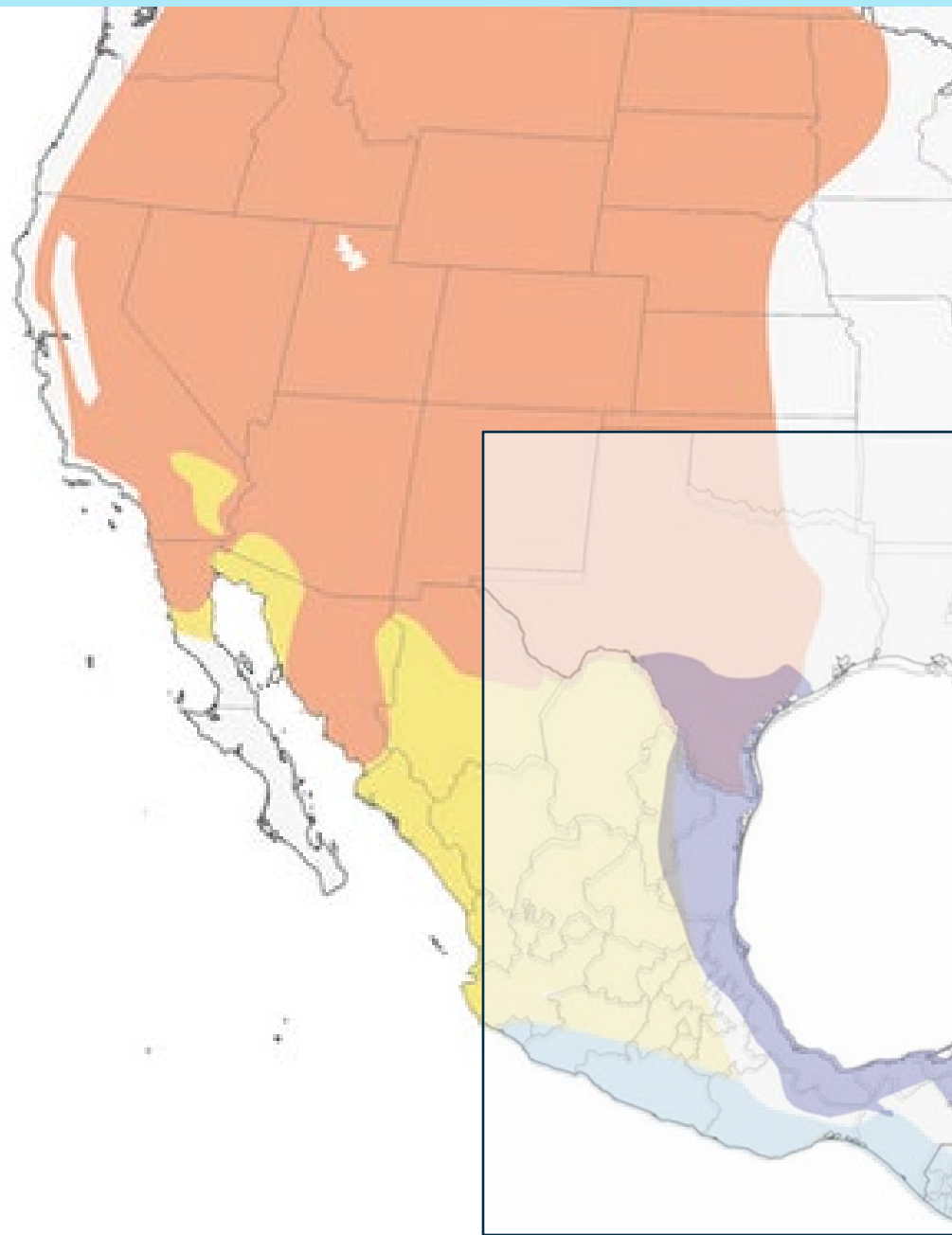
Photo by Richard & Patricia Williams



Photo by Carl Poldrak

WESTERN
VS
COUCH'S





Western



Couch's

Western



Photo by Darren Clark

Couch's

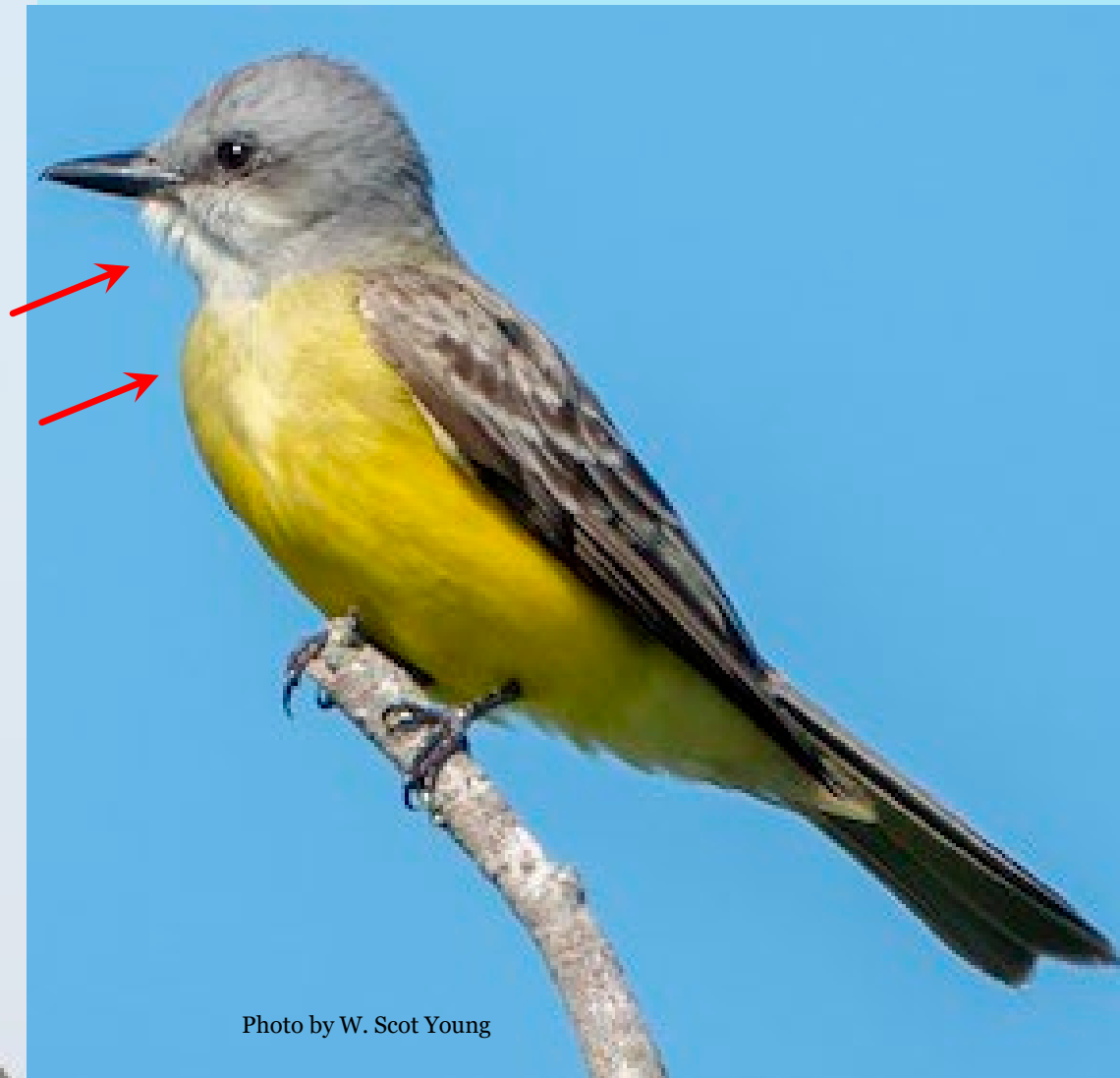


Photo by W. Scot Young

TROPICAL

Tyrannus melancholicus
melancholy



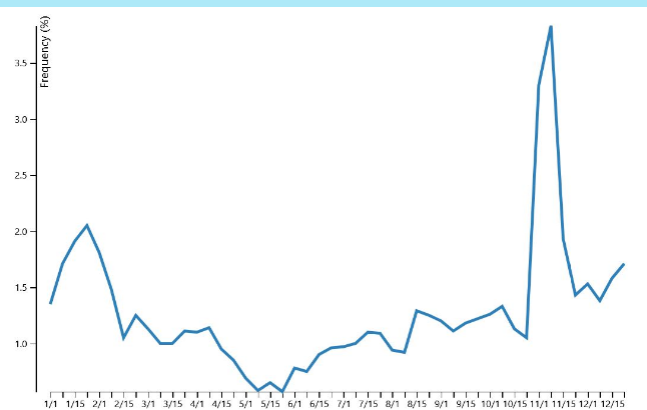
TROPICAL



Photo by Michael Linz

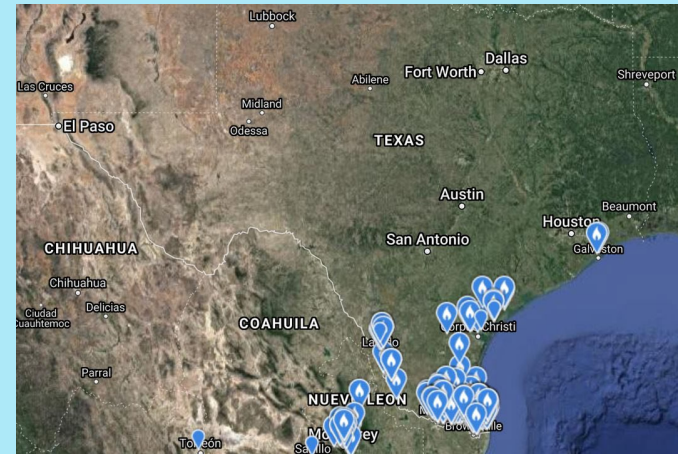


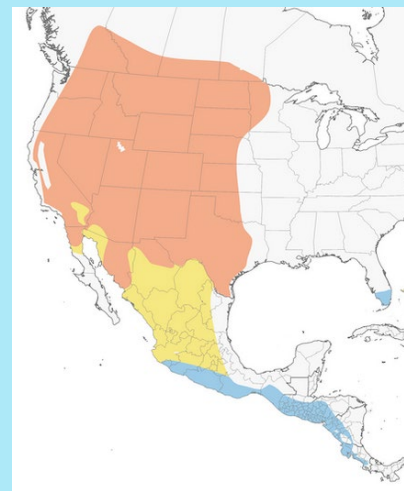
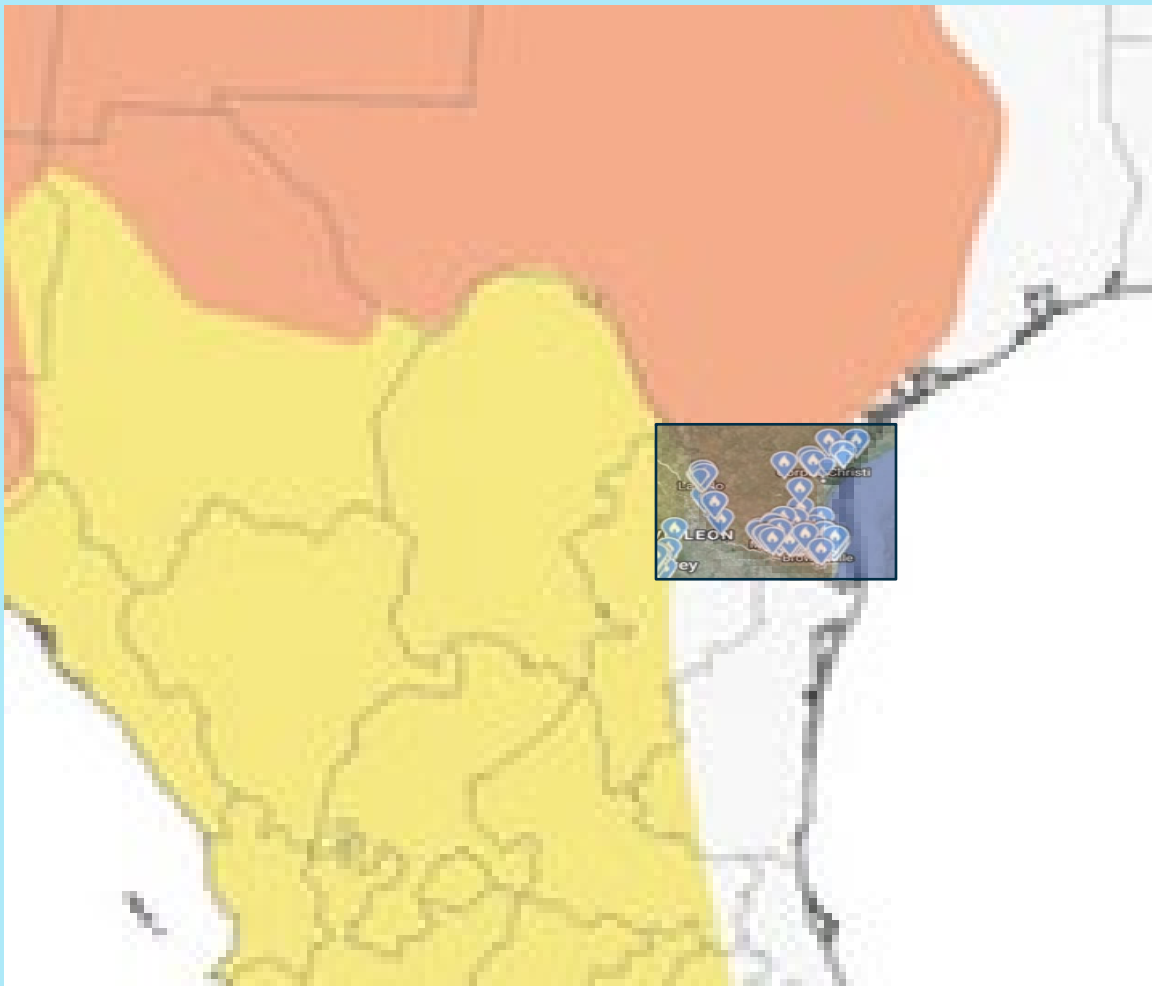
Photo by Carlos Croce



Topical

Winter Sightings (Dec-Feb)





Western



Tropical

HABIT 3 WHERE?

HABITAT & MICRO-HABITAT



Tropical

- Open to semi-open country with scattered perches in forest gaps and edges
- Often near water
- Scrubby woodlands
- Riparian corridors
- Pastures
- Parks
- Ranches
- Gardens

WESTERN VS TROPICAL



Western



Photo by Darren Clark

Tropical



Photo by Rolando Chavez

COUCH'S VS TROPICAL

WARNING:

Don't attempt visual ID without further study, experience, & expertise

Use voice (very distinctive)



Couch's



Photo by Mark R. Johnson

Tropical



Photo by W. Scot Young

VIBRANCE & EXTENT OF YELLOW BELLY

Couch's
&
Tropical

Cassin's

Western



Increasing



Photo by Charles Lyon

Tails



Photo by Robert Hamilton



Photo by Lukasz Pulawski



Photo by Cynthia Madsen

Western



Photo by Charles Lyon

Cassin's



Photo by Robert Hamilton

Tails

Tropical



Photo by Lukasz Pulawski

Couch's



Photo by Cynthia Madsen



Photo by Charles Lyon

Western

Tropical



Photo by Robert Hamilton

Cassin's

Couch's



Photo by Lukasz Pulawski



Photo by Cynthia Madsen

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER

Tyrannus forficatus

Pair of scissors

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER



Photo by Doug Gochfeld

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER



Photo by Laura Keene

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER

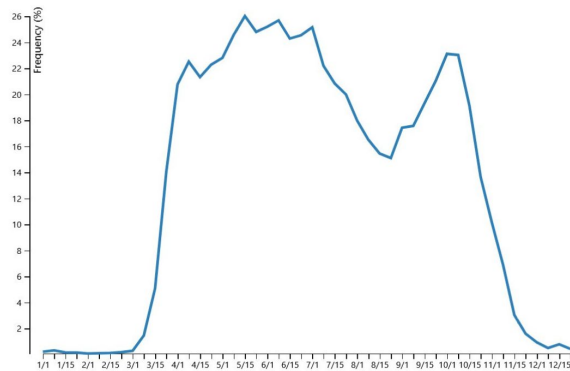
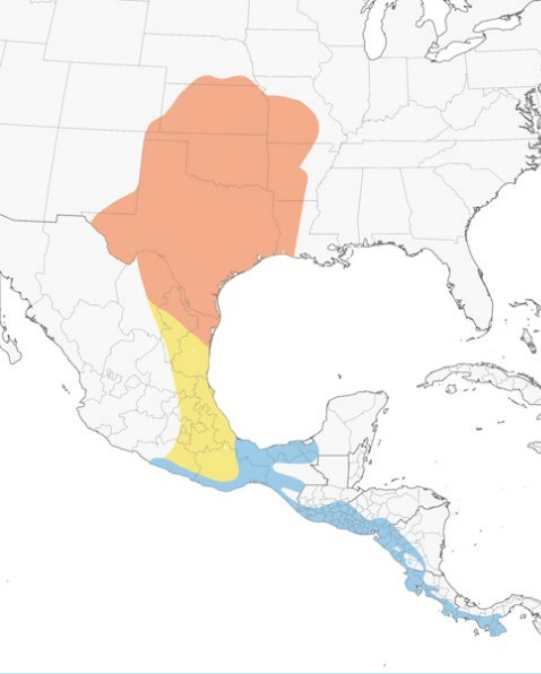


Photo by Timothy P. Jones

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER

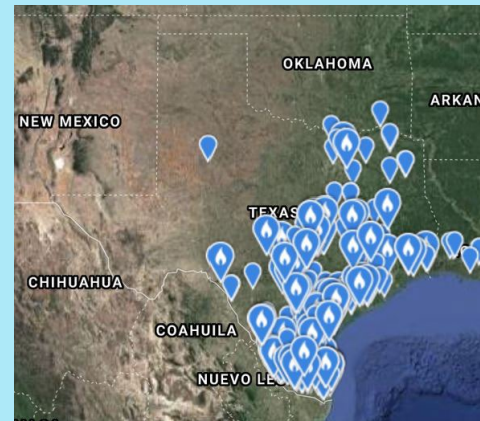


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Winter Sightings (Dec-Feb)



HABIT 3 WHERE?

HABITAT & MICRO-HABITAT

- Savannas with scattered trees
- Shrublands
- Villages & Towns
- Golf courses
- Parks
- Brush patches

Scissor-tailed





Photo by Jesse Watson

FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER

Tyrannus savana

Savanna grasslands

FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER



Photo by Ian Davies



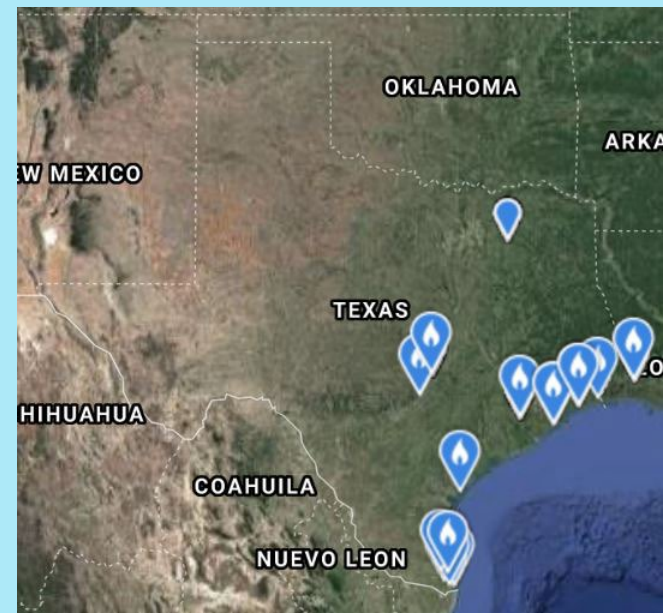
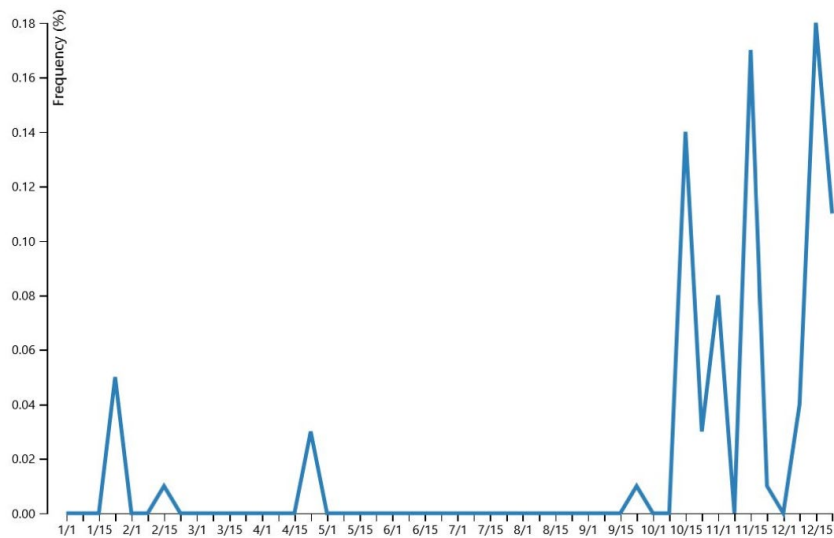
FORK-TAILED

(2012 AUSTIN)
(FOUND BY SHELIA HARGIS)





Fork-tailed Flycatcher



Fork-tailed Flycatcher



HABIT 3 WHERE?

HABITAT & MICRO-HABITAT



A wide variety of habitats including:

- Pastures
- Riparian forests
- Open residential areas

Fork-tailed
Flycatcher



Fork-tailed Flycatcher



Near McKinney Falls SP
12/18/12

Photo by Jeffrey E Patterson

Fork-tailed Flycatcher



Photo by Luke Seitz

Fork-tailed Flycatcher



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher



KINGBIRD SUMMARY

- ▶ Location very important
- ▶ Be ready for an “odd looking **Eastern**”
 - ▶ **Gray** (on coast)
 - ▶ **Thick-billed** (out west)
- ▶ **Western** – default yellow-bellied kingbird in summer
- ▶ **Western** is pale – **Cassin’s** is dark & contrasty
- ▶ **Western** yellow stops short of breast
- ▶ **Couch’s/Tropical** yellow extends close to throat
- ▶ **Couch’s** vs **Tropical** – know the vocalizations
- ▶ Look for a “black headed **Scissor-tail**” (**Fork-tail**)