

WEST VIRGINIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Number: WVBRC 2023-9 Species: Western Kingbird– Berkeley Co

Vote (select only one) _X_ For State List _Hypothetical List _Against _Exotic

Reasons voting FOR the record: (*attach more pages if necessary*)

- CM1) There are three species of similar kingbirds in the western United States: Western, Cassin's, and Tropical. Their similarity can make it difficult to distinguish between the species, but one of the more reliable features to aid in identification is the pattern of the tail. Only Western Kingbird has a black tail with white outer tail feathers. The photographs included in this report do show the white outer tail feathers, thus eliminating Cassin's and Tropical kingbirds from consideration. In addition, a review of eBird species maps shows that Western Kingbird has been recorded in almost every state east of the Mississippi River. The other two species are seldom reported east of the Mississippi and are significantly less likely to show up as vagrants in the east.
- CM2) Excellent photographic evidence is included in this record to document the bird as a Western Kingbird. The prominent field marks are clearly visible including posture, light gray head, light yellow belly and white outer tail feather markings. These field marks distinguish Western Kingbird from Cassin's Kingbird and Eastern Kingbird. The lack of a forked tail also rules out Couch's and Tropical Kingbird.
- CM3) Western and Cassin's Kingbird are similar. Given the images, I am in support of this record as a western kingbird.
- CM4) A nice writeup and photos showing the Western Kingbird. White outer tail feathers eliminate other Tyrannus species.
- CM5) This bird has a classic Kingbird profile. As shown in the photographs, it possesses a squared off tail with a white margin, a pale gray head, a short bill, a whitish throat trailing into a yellow belly. It is somewhat similar to a GCFL, but lacks the latter's rufous tail. It is unlike the TRKI in having a short bill, not the long one expected on a Tropical Kingbird. It is also similar to a Couch's Kingbird, but a Couch's would present a much thicker bill. The bird is almost certainly identified correctly as a Western Kingbird in my opinion.
- CM6) Detailed field marks (notably white outer rectrices) vs other similar kingbirds provided by experienced observers, along with photographs. Corroborated by prior record in same geography. Photographs highlight key characteristics.
- CM7) As the submitter for this record, I know the research that went into the sighting to verify the species. Also, having Alex Tsiatsos' (birder who accompanied me that morning) verification for the identification was instrumental in realizing that we had a Western Kingbird WV record for submission to the Records Committee.