

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*)
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage): 2, male and female, both apparently adults (ASY) by lack of molt limits in flight feathers
3. Parish: Cameron
Specific Locality: Coastal Club lodge (private property/restricted access), 10.1 mi SSW of Bell City, LA.
4. Date(s) when observed: 16 and 17 Feb 2016
5. Time(s) of day when observed: around mid-day on both days (11:20-11:30 am on 16th, and 12:30-1:00 pm on 17th)
6. Reporting observer and address: Erik I. Johnson, 102 Goodwood Cir., Lafayette, LA 70508
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): Richard Crowell originally found the birds the morning of 16 February 2016, and initially identified them as Tropical Kingbirds as his Peterson Guide did not have a Couch's Kingbird image. And he said there were two. After relocating the birds, Karen Westphal and Timmy Vincent also identified the birds, and several other people were present to see the birds, but were beginning birders.
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s): none known.
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): perfectly clear. Birds due west of where we were standing. Light a little harsh when the birds were slightly to the south, and better when birds were to the north, but generally viewing conditions were good to great.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): 10 x 42 Swarovski EL binoculars, Nikon D7000 DLSR with 80-400 mm f/4.5-5.6 lens.
11. Distance to bird(s): 20 – 100 feet
12. Duration of observation: ~20 minutes or so the first day, about 30 minutes or so the second day.

13. Habitat: Levee treeline dominated by tallow, but also other deciduous trees and thicker understory of wax myrtle and other deciduous shrubs.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):

Birds were called in using playback – at first experimenting with both Tropical and Couch’s Kingbird calls. Once the birds came in (basically at the same time), one bird began calling typical Couch’s Kingbird calls. At that point they were sallying for insects, calling occasionally, and just putting on a fantastic show, often flying towards us making long flights into the air to catch insects, returning back to the treeline. It was quite interesting to see a pair (has a pair been documented before in LA?) basically associating with each other. They both came in to playback at the same time, and were not aggressive toward each other. They were frequently sallying, often crossing paths, and basically using the same air space.

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, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

Obviously Tropical/Couch’s Kingbird types with olive tail with slight notch, extensive yellow underparts extending into chest, and large heavy bill. I wouldn’t have identified them as Couch’s over Tropical except that one bird (the male, as confirmed on the spot with spread wing photos as it was sallying) was calling frequently. The other bird (a female, as confirmed on the spot with spread wing photos) was essentially silent, but briefly gave a few whisper calls – the Song Sparrow-like “chimp” and a couple “phweee”s.

16. Voice: The male was calling frequently, and this is well documented by the videos. The female gave one brief series (lasting about 5 seconds) of whispered calls as the male was closer giving loud calls. See also 15/Description.

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

Western/Cassin’s eliminated by olive tail color and large bill size. Tropical Kingbird eliminated by vocalizations given by both birds. Other “yellow-bellied” Tyrannus I suppose would be eliminated by call.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Yes, photos and videos obtained.

Videos can be downloaded from:

<https://vimeo.com/155770434>

<https://vimeo.com/155770435>

19. Previous experience with this species: I've seen a returning male Couch's Kingbird near Kaplan for three winters in a row, which has been a very vocal bird, so I'm comfortable with identifying these by sound with recent experience. I'm also very familiar with Tropical Kingbird from several visits to Costa Rica, and extensive experience (1+ years) in Brazil. I've also seen several other Couch's/Tropical Kingbirds over the last couple years in south LA, and feel confident in quickly distinguishing them from Western Kingbirds.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: Peterson Guide. Audubon Bird ID app for Android.

b. after observation: none

21. This description is written from:

<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made during the observation.	Are notes attached?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made after the observation.	At what date?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	memory		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	study of images		

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain: Yes.

23. Date: 17 February 2016

Time: 10:00 pm

24. May the LBRC have permission to display this report or portions of this report on its website? Yes

If yes, may we include your name with the report? Yes





