

# Louisiana Bird Records Committee

## Rare Bird Documentation

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*Species:* Say's Phoebe, *Sayornis saya*

*Number of individuals:* 1

*Age and Sex:* Adult? Unknown.

*Date:* 31 October, 2014; 1 November, 2014; 19 January, 2015

*Location:* Potter Road near the intersection with Marceaux Road, north of Thornwell, Jefferson Davis Par.

*Lat/Long:*

*Other Observers:* Robb Brumfield, Oscar Johnson, Andre Moncrieff, Cameron Rutt, Ryan Terrill, Timothy White

*Original Observer:* Myself, Dan O'Malley

**Circumstances.** I originally found this bird on a Yellow Rails and Rice Festival field trip led by myself and Dan O'Malley. We were driving together, and the bird flashed across the road in front of us, landing on a fence line. We then stopped the caravan of other birders who were with us, and we were treated to extended views through a scope as the bird sat on the fence and occasionally sallied out or moved up and down the fence line. I was also able to take some digiscoped photos with my iPhone.

The next day Oscar Johnson and I returned to see the bird. After some searching we refound the bird on the other side of a large pasture, where we again had extended scope views. The bird was not quite as accommodating, moving around more and eventually disappearing behind a building.

The third time I saw the bird was during an epic day of chasing rarities with a large contingent of LSUMNS students and faculty. We returned to the location that I had seen the Say's Phoebe twice previously, but after 30 minutes of searching, we were unable to find it. As we were paused at the intersection of Potter and Marceaux Roads, Oscar Johnson spotted the bird down the fence line along Marceaux Road. We were again treated to extended views of the bird as it sat on the fence.

**Description.** This was a medium-sized flycatcher, larger than an Eastern Phoebe, and distinctively colored.

Overall, the bird was a light tannish-gray, with a slightly darker, contrasting head. The bill was all-dark. The upper chest was slightly more brown, and contrasted markedly with the under parts, which were salmon-tan. The tail was relatively long, and black. The wings were long and dark, though not as dark as the tail, and the bird had pale-tipped greater coverts, giving it a pale wingbar.

**Discussion.** This was a distinctive bird. Given even a half-decent view, Say's Phoebes are completely unmistakable. The combination of salmon underparts, black tail and grayish-tan upperparts are unlike any other North American flycatcher.

I am very familiar with Say's Phoebes, as they are a very common component to the California avifauna.

**Literature Consulted.** None.