

**LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
RARE BIRD DOCUMENTATION**

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Species: Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus*

Location: Capitol Lake, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Date: 30 December 2019

Age and sex: Hatch year (I'm pretty sure), possibly male

Molt status: None

Number of individuals: One

Other observers: Robb Brumfield

Original observer: Jayne Willingham

Circumstances: I spent the morning at Capitol Lakes and Arsenal Park looking for a yellow-bellied Kingbird that had been reported as a Western on 28 December, but the photos showed it to be a Couch's/Tropical, either of which would, I believe, be a first parish record. I eventually found the bird flycatching over the north end of the northern lake, but I spotted it from the south end. When I got over to where it was the bird had moved to the opposite shore, so I decided to try some playback to see which species it would respond to. I got no response to two loud bouts of Couch's call and song, and then tried Tropical song (no response) and call, whereupon it crossed the lake and landed in the tree above me and gave a few short calls typical of Tropical. I stayed with the bird for about forty minutes until Robb arrived and then I went on my way. The bird called a few more times and I was able to get a short recording on my phone. Took notes on my eBird checklist shortly after the observation: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S62773028>
Weather: about 50 degrees, calm, clear skies.

Description: A yellow-bellied kingbird with extensive yellow underparts extending high onto chest, with only a slight greenish wash on upper chest. Back olive green, wings dark with pale edging. Throat whitish, faint broad dark trans-ocular line. Tail dark brownish with no pale edgings visible and a double-rounded tip. Bill black. Crown gray. Calls in response to playback typical of the species: a rapid metallic trill of 4-8 or so notes. It also gave a few bouts of song, so perhaps a male? The song was the same quality as the call, but with more widely spaced notes at the beginning and then accelerating and rising in pitch into a rapid trill. Photos show that outer primaries are not emarginated, so likely in formative plumage (i.e. hatch year). Bill shape in photos also perhaps more suggestive of Tropical (longer and thinner), but I find that mark hard to judge reliably.

Discussion: Couch's and Tropical are tough to separate by plumage, but the calls I heard and recorded are diagnostic of Tropical. This bird also exhibited a few field marks that are supportive of the ID of Tropical, but I find them hard to definitively ascertain. First, a slight olive wash to the chest (rather than pure lemon yellow), a rather long narrow bill (rather than shorter and thicker), and a proportionally longer tail beyond the undertail coverts. I didn't get a good enough look at the wing coverts to see if the bird had any molt limits, but the shape of the outer primaries (broad, not emarginated) suggests a young bird.









