

Over the course of the next three months, the Great Kiskadee was observed in Rondeau Park by many birders. Records for this bird were submitted to eBird daily from 7-16 September, after which time the bird disappeared for a few weeks, only to reappear again on 18 October and eBird data show the bird was seen and/or heard daily from 18-31 October and most days from 2-9 November. Rondeau's Great Kiskadee disappeared again at this time, but was observed again in December and again seen or heard daily from 2-10 December. Though local birders continued to search daily for the next week, hoping to score the Great Kiskadee as a new species for the Rondeau/Blenheim Christmas Bird Count on 16 December, the bird was never seen or heard again after 10 December 2018 (eBird 2020).



Great Kiskadee at Rondeau
11 September 2018
Photo: P. Allen Woodliffe

Extralimital records of the Great Kiskadee

P. Allen Woodliffe

THE GREAT KISKADEE, known as the Derby Flycatcher at the time, was first recorded north of Mexico in 1879 when two were shot near Lake San Jose along the lower Rio Grande in southern Texas (Bent 1942). It was recorded on rare occasions for several decades after that, but only in extreme southern Texas. While it was thought in the late 1800s and early 1900s that the species would not do well in Texas due to the ongoing changes in natural habitat (Bent 1942), it showed remarkable adaptation to such changes. It has never been considered much of a

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migrant especially compared with many other flycatcher species, remaining largely in its normal range most of the time. Yet it has expanded that range quite a bit.

In recent years, in North America north of Mexico, it is most often seen south of the general Houston to San Antonio latitude (29° 30' N); north of there, the records diminish considerably (eBird 2020). Nonetheless, there have been scattered observations from as far west as southern Arizona to as far east as South Carolina and to as far north as South Dakota.

Spring records of Great Kiskadee well beyond the species normal range in places like Colorado, Tennessee and Arkansas, are single day records only. However, when a Great Kiskadee shows up well beyond its normal range in late summer or early winter, it may linger for quite a while (eBird 2020). For example, while there are only three records for Arizona, one of them included a bird staying at Canoa, a short distance south of Tucson, from 27 December 1979 to 6 May 1980 (Tucson Audubon Society 2011). Another bird was present in Kansas from 15 September to 10 November 2013. One that showed up in South Carolina in February 2017 was observed until April 2018. The northernmost record of Great Kiskadee on eBird is just north of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where one was observed from 14 November 2015 to 1 January 2016. These extralimital birds were all present for a period ranging from approximately four weeks to well over a year.

As we know, the bird at Rondeau fits that pattern: it was seen regularly, but intermittently, from 7 September to 10 December 2018 (Dragon 2020). Interestingly, a bird was observed in north-eastern Indiana, a straight-line distance of about 400 km southwest of Rondeau, from 17 December 2018 to 13 January 2019. We may surmise that the Rondeau bird had finally had enough of Ontario's winter and decided to return towards warmer climes.

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