

ABOUT THE COVER: Eastern Kingbird

The Eastern Kingbird is a strongly marked and handsome bird. It has a black head with a concealed red crown patch; the back is slate gray; the underparts are white from the chin to the undertail coverts; and the fan-shaped tail is black, broadly tipped with white. Like most flycatchers, the posture is erect and alert. In flight it moves with such short quick wing beats that it appears to quiver when hovering over tall grass or darting for insects from an exposed twig. Since it relies for food mainly on insect life, it prefers open habitat around orchards, borders of fields, along highways, and in open woods. Because Eastern Kingbirds perch so conspicuously on take-off pads such as fence posts, tops of isolated trees, and utility wires, they provide easy identification even from a car window.

When kingbirds arrive in New England during the first part of May, they remain uncharacteristically quiet for a few days both in voice and behavior -- almost listless in comparison to the showy return of other birds such as Northern Orioles. It is not long, however, before the Eastern Kingbird lives up to its scientific name *Tyrannus tyrannus*, which originated from the Latin meaning monarch or ruler. Once a territory is established, they become so aggressive that they drive away anything that comes within range, be it man, bird, or beast. Defiant and fearless, they assume the offensive and seem to consider anything large their enemy. Size makes no difference -- hawks, crows, owls, and vultures get the brunt of the punishment. And they are not a mere annoyance to their victims as they very often strike with pointed bills and, in some cases, ride the backs of these larger birds pulling out feathers. To underscore their courage and audacity, there was a report once of an Eastern Kingbird repeatedly attacking a low-flying airplane crossing its territory.

Hail to the chief!

J. B. Hallett, Jr.

SIXTH ANNUAL BIRD CARVING EXHIBITION

At the South Shore Regional Center
in Marshfield

June 4 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. June 5 12 noon - 5 p.m.



Bird carving demonstrations • Displays
of over 35 bird carvers' work • Bird pho-
tography exhibit • Natural history walks
• Natural history and art book sale

Fee: \$2 MAS members; \$3 nonmembers
For more information call: 617-837-9400