

ended with the words "O-U-T spells out, you old dirty dishrag you". The child pointed to by the leader when saying "you" had to be "it" (P).

A folk remedy for croup: This was made by boiling the fat from a Pileated Woodpecker. This was given by mouth (N).

A superstition about birds and human diseases: There is a belief that birds will leave an infected area during an epidemic. This was noted in a Corinth newspaper during a yellow fever scare in the state. A large flock of "speckled" hawks in migration had been sighted over the town (P).

Perhaps this brief collection of folklore pertaining to birds in Mississippi will encourage others to collect such lore. One may even come across a superstition or belief that is unique for this state.

First Nesting Record of Gray Kingbirds in Mississippi

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From 20 to 24 May 1976, Wayne C. Weber observed a pair of Gray Kingbirds (Tyrannus dominicensis) at the National Park Service ranger station on Horn Island, Jackson County, Mississippi, within the Mississippi section of Gulf Islands National Seashore. The birds appeared to be occupying a territory, and were seen at various times to pursue Eastern Kingbirds (Tyrannus tyrannus), Fish Crows (Corvus ossifragus), and Mockingbirds (Mimus polyglottos); however, no nest could be found at that time. The nest, a flimsy structure built on a slash pine (Pinus elliottii) limb about 18 feet from the ground and 4 feet from the trunk, was finally located about 6 June by Mike Batton of the Park Services staff. The birds were observed about the nest on numerous occasions during June by Batton and by park ranger Robert McDonald, but the nest contents could not be determined.

On 28 June, Weber, Jackson, and Richard Rummel visited the locality and discovered young in the top of a slash pine near the nest tree (Fig. 1). These were fed several times by both parents. To our knowledge, this is the first confirmed nesting of Gray Kingbirds in Mississippi.

We know of only three previously published records of Gray Kingbirds in the state, all of single birds. The first was one collected by Sterling G. Clawson and Lovett E. Williams (MOS Newsletter 7(3):12, 1962)



Fig. 1. Newly-fledged Gray Kingbirds in slash pine near Horn Island ranger station. Photograph by J. A. Jackson, 28 June 1976.

on 28 April 1962 at Bellefontaine Beach, on the mainland coast directly north of Horn Island; this bird is now in the collection of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Sciences in Jackson. On 23 May 1963, Henry D. Haberyan (MOS Newsletter 8(3):13-15, 1963) saw one on Horn Island; and a third bird was seen at Bellefontaine Beach on 21 July 1963 by Dr. and Mrs. Bedford Floyd (MOS Newsletter 9(1):2, 1964).

In addition, Donald M. Bradburn of New Orleans, who has visited Horn Island several times a year for many years, has numerous unpublished sightings of Gray Kingbirds. Bradburn first recorded Gray Kingbirds on 15 August 1964, when he photographed them near the chimney area on Horn Island, about 3 miles west of the ranger station. He states that several pairs were present on the island each year until 1969. On 17 and 18 August 1969, Horn Island was devastated by Hurricane Camille, with winds up to 200 mph. After Camille, Gray Kingbirds were apparently absent until 1974, when Bradburn recorded one on 20 July. Since then, only the pair in the vicinity of the ranger station has been observed. Despite this Weber noted in 1976 that Mockingbirds in the "chimney" area frequently imitated Gray Kingbirds in their songs, although the nearest kingbirds were 3 miles away. This could indicate either movement by Mockingbirds, or the former residence and possibly nesting of Gray Kingbirds in the "chimney" area.

Bradburn also has one Gray Kingbird sighting from Petit Bois Island, just east of Horn Island. He saw a single bird there on 13 July 1974.

James D. Lazell, Jr., of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, reported seeing a Gray Kingbird at the Horn Island ranger station on 22 February 1976. If correct, this record is quite extraordinary, even though there are a few winter records in southern Florida (e.g. *American Birds* 29:682, 1975, and 30:359, 1976). Imhof (*Alabama Birds*, 2nd ed., Univ. of Alabama Press, University, Ala., 1976) cites extreme dates for Alabama of 11 April and 30 October, and late April is probably the normal arrival date.

The habitat occupied by Gray Kingbirds in Mississippi is open slash pine forest close to salt water. Although the species in Florida appears to prefer mangroves and live oaks for nesting habitat (Bent, *Life histories of North American flycatchers, larks, swallows, and their allies*, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 179, 1942), slash pines are almost the only trees available on Horn Island.

Gray Kingbirds appear to have undergone a slow westward range expansion along the northern Gulf Coast in recent years. Although the species has nested for several decades at Pensacola, Florida (Bent, *op. cit.*), it was first recorded in Alabama only in 1950, at Fort Morgan (Imhof, *op. cit.*). The westernmost previously-known nesting locality is Dauphin Island, Alabama, about 30 miles east of Horn Island. Numbers seem to be increasing in Alabama; a record count of 30 was made on Dauphin Island in August 1975 (*American Birds* 30:85, 1976). In Louisiana, only four definite records of occurrence are known (Lowery, *Louisiana Birds*, 3rd ed., Louisiana State Univ. Press, Baton Rouge, La., 1974). Although the reasons for this range expansion are unknown, observers should be alert for possible future nestings of Gray Kingbirds even farther west in coastal Mississippi or Louisiana.

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