

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*

Among the vagrant flycatchers that originate from southern Arizona and western Mexico, the Tropical Kingbird is the most frequent. In San Diego County it is rare but annual in fall, very rare in winter. The yellow-suffused breast and longer, heavier bill are better features for distinguishing the Tropical from the Western and Cassin's Kingbirds than the notched tail. With the extremely similar Couch's Kingbird (*T. couchii*) now demonstrated, on the basis of tape recordings of the diagnostic call, to have reached Orange County (Rottenborn and Morlan 2000), noting the high-pitched twittering call of the Tropical becomes all the more important to its identification in California.

Migration: The Tropical Kingbird reaches California primarily in the fall. A few individuals are found every year, along or near the coast. The earliest known date in San Diego County is 12 September (1962, one at Coronado, T9, McCaskie and Banks 1964). The species is most numerous from late September through mid October. The maximum for a single day is seven in the Tijuana River valley 8 October 1966 (AFN 21:78, 1967). The species' frequency declines gradually through November, so there is no division between fall and winter records. One photographed at Border Field State Park (W10), 26–28 April 2001 (M. B. Mulrooney, NAB 55:357, 2001) provided a unique spring record.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Winter: There are at least 11 winter records, all within 11 miles of the coast. Four were between 1997 and 2002: one at Bonsall (F8) 9 February 2001 (P. A. Ginsburg), one at Rohr Park (T12) 1 December 2001–14 January 2002 (C. G. Edwards et al.), two in Imperial Beach (V10) 20 December 1997–24 January 1998 (C. G. Edwards et al.), and one at the Dairy Mart pond in the Tijuana River valley (V11) 13 December 1998–5 February 1999 (G. McCaskie, NAB 53:209, 1999). The latest winter record is of one at Coronado Cays on the Silver Strand (T9) on 2 March 1974 (AB 28:693, 1974).