

**Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form**

2003-38

ACCEPTED

CBRC FILE #: 2003-38		
<b>RESULTS:</b>		
Species: (Common Name) Vermilion Flycatcher		(Scientific Name) Pyrocephalus rubinus
Date(s) of occurrence: 5/25/03		
Number of birds seen: 1	Sex: female	Plumage: first year
Exact location: Carrizo Canyon Picnic Area in the Commanche National Grasslands. The bird was located along the trail in the canyon bottom at a point where the trail crosses the stream and there are the remnants of an old steel cable crossing.		
County: Baca	Nearest town: Campo	Elevation:
Length of observation: ~one minute	Time(s) of observation: approx. 2 p.m.	
Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Julianna Fessenden-Rahn		
Other observers who independently saw the bird(s):		
Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observers position: Conditions were light overcast with diffuse sunlight nearly overhead.		
Optical equipment used: Bausch and Lomb Elite 8x42 binoculars		
Distance to bird(s) (estimated, unless otherwise noted): 10 to 12 meters		
Was (Were) bird(s) photographed? no	If so, are you submitting photos? n/a	
Who took the photograph(s)? n/a		
Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred: The bird was observed in a riparian environment with adjacent short cliffs (3-5 m), mature cottonwoods and medium to tall shrubs.		
Describe the bird's (birds') behaviors, particularly behaviors that were used in supporting the identification, e.g., flying, feeding, habits: The bird remained perched until flying out of sight behind a nearby large boulder.		
DESCRIPTION – When first seen, the bird was perched on a cable directly over the stream. I initially dismissed it as another Eastern Phoebe of which we had been seeing many throughout the day in the nearby Cottonwood Canyon. What caught my eye was the brightness of the yellow on its under parts. Since the diffuse sunlight was directly overhead and the surface of the quiescent stream was covered with bright yellowish-green new growth of aquatic plants, I assumed that the reason for the coloration was due to reflection of light off the water/plant surface. To verify this I trained my binoculars on the bird and immediately noticed that it had fine dark streaking on its off-white breast. As I continued to observe the bird, an Eastern Phoebe alighted nearby in the same field of view. The first thing I noted was that the yellow of the subject bird was much brighter than that of the phoebe indicating that the reflection of yellowish light from the water surface was not, or at least not entirely, responsible for the observed coloration. Although their size was similar, the phoebe appeared somewhat larger (or perhaps just stockier) with the bill being slightly larger relative to overall size of the head. The delineation between the dark gray feathers of the head and auriculars and the off-white of the throat was much more well defined in the subject bird than in the phoebe with the phoebes change in color being much more gradational. I should note here that the light supercilium that is a diagnostic of female VEFL was not evident. Neither bird showed evidence of an eye-ring. The phoebe actively flicked its tail while the subject bird sat rather stationary. After ~30 seconds of simultaneous observation, both birds flew off out of sight behind a nearby boulder. The comparison to the nearby phoebe along with the faint but obvious dark streaking on the upper breast of the bird led me to immediately conclude that it was a female Vermilion Flycatcher.		
Describe the bird's (birds') call(s) and/or song(s), if noted: The bird made no vocalizations during observation.		
SIMILAR SPECIES – See comparison to Eastern Phoebe above. Say's Phoebe was discounted because underparts were yellow and not cinnamon and breast and throat were white to off-white and not gray.		
What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? Have observed female VEFL once in S. California and several times in W. Texas and in Big Bend N.P. Very familiar with Say's Phoebe throughout the western U.S. and somewhat familiar with Eastern Phoebe from wintering birds in Texas and visits to the Eastern U.S.		
List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how these influenced your identification (during and after observation): Consulted with The Sibley Guide immediately upon returning to the car ~15 minutes after seeing the bird for verification.		
This report was made from (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> notes made during observation <input type="checkbox"/> notes made after observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> later from memory.		
Date and time of written report: 5/28/03, ~5 p.m.		
Reporting observer: Thom Rahn	Signature: <i>Thom Rahn</i>	
Reporting observer's address: P.O. Box 392		
City: Los Alamos	State: NM	Zip: 87544