

1998-93

ACCEPTED (7-0)

## COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

BLACK PHOEBE  
Sayornis nigricansLocation: Valco Ponds; Pueblo County; Pueblo, ColoradoDate of observation: April 21, 1998Known date(s) of occurrence: April 20-21, 1998

This bird was discovered by Brandon Percival on April 20, 1998 and also seen by Mark Hullinger and Mark Yaeger.

I found the bird about 7:15 p.m. in a small side tributary of the Arkansas River. The channel has cut banks, some overhanging vegetation, still pools, sand bars and two small bridges. The bird was actively calling and flycatching from perches along the sides of the channel. It flew out and picked insects from the water's surface and then consumed them from perches on the sandbar or from perches on twigs and roots. It was a tail wagger. While perched on the sand bar and sometimes on a twig its posture was sometimes unusual: tail cocked up slightly and both wings drooped nearly to the ground. The bird's call was instantly recognizable – a single thin piping note given over and over. I observed it for about 15 minutes until about 7:30 p.m. I was about 25 feet away and got excellent views with my B & L Elite 10x40 binoculars.

Description:

This was a small, slender flycatcher about the size and shape of a Say's Phoebe – about 6" long. It seemed a little stubbier and plumper though and perched more horizontally than that species. It had short black legs and feet, black bill and black eyes. It was overall dark with a white belly, lower abdomen and undertail coverts. The color of the rest was blackest on the head and face where it was a sooty dark charcoal gray, nearly black. The back, wings and tail were a little less black, with vague browner tones. The bird had a single pale indistinct wingbar on the wing and the secondaries were pale edged, giving it two light streaks along the upper folded wing. It was black on the chin and throat and upper breast. The white of the belly and black on the breast met on the chest in a pointed, inverted "V". It had a long, slim blackish-brown tail. The bill was small and wide.

Similar Species:

The slim size and short, wide bill indicate a flycatcher. The only similarly patterned bird, the Slate-colored Junco has a conical pink bill and white edges to the tail. Of flycatchers, the Say's and Eastern phoebes are most similar but are brownish-gray and either orangish-brown or greenish-white – not black. Both lack the white belly and the black on the chin, throat and breast.

Experience with Species:

I have seen most similar birds and have seen Black Phoebes many times.

This report was made from notes taken immediately after observation.

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