

Napa-Solano Audubon's Rare Bird Alert #11 - Tropical Kingbird 1-3-22

Greetings Napa Solano Audubon Members, Family & Friends:

Periodically, we will send out Rare Birding Alerts of uncommon or rare species that have been seen in our area.

Location: A Kingbird was spotted on January 2nd, resting on the large red sculpture on the berm for the di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art Museum Reservoir near the front parking lot. The observers were not sure if it was a Western or a Tropical Kingbird. Lucas and I visited the Museum early in the morning of January 3rd and searched the grounds for about an hour with no luck until we started to leave, and low and behold the Kingbird flew in and landed on the parking lot fence. It then flew up on the berm for some close-up photos. As we suspected its large bill, bright yellow breast extending high to the neck, and greener tones on the back pointed to a Tropical Kingbird. Western Kingbirds migrate to Central America in the Fall and very rarely occur in Northern California in the winter. Murray Berner and Larry Kent located the Kingbird near the willows on the front lawn of Domaine Carneros Winery and at the di Rosa Museum's front lawn later in the morning. Evidently, the Tropical Kingbird has been moving back and forth between the front lawns of the di Rosa Art Museum and Domaine Carneros Winery along Highway 12/121 near Duhig Road (also known as the Carneros Highway) that runs between Napa and Sonoma.

Identification: 3 of our Western Kingbirds are very close in plumage: Western, Tropical & Couch's. Both the Couch's and Tropical Kingbirds are virtually identical and can only be positively identified by their calls. The Couch's typically resides in Southern Texas and Central America. There are only a few records in New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada, and only two records ever from California. The first was in Fullerton, CA in January 1998. Most recently a Couch's was observed in Visalia, CA in December and January of 2015-16. (Records found in eBird). The most likely overwintering Kingbird is the Tropical. Last winter, there was a Tropical Kingbird that overwintered in Vallejo's Lake Dalwigk Park that we reported in our Birding Notes. The Tropical Kingbird is slightly larger than the Western with a larger and longer bill, brighter yellow belly and breast that extends higher to the throat. Its back has green tones rather than the grayer/browner tones of the Western and in flight the tail is all brown whereas the Western almost always has white edgings.

The Tropical Kingbird is a 1st County Record for Napa. We are hoping that this Tropical Kingbird will remain in Napa for the Winter. We hope you have time to head out to the diRosa Museum to see it. Important to note, the diRosa Museum is only open from Friday - Monday and closed Tuesday - Thursday. If you visit mid-week you may be able to see it at Domain Carneros or on the front lawn of the di Rosa Museum visible from outside the gate.



