

## UTAH BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

COMMON NAME: Black Phoebe

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sayornis nigricans*

DATE: May 9, 2008

TIME: ~8PM-9PM

LENGTH OF TIME OBSERVED: ~60 mins

NUMBER: 1

AGE: Adult

SEX: unknown

LOCATION: Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge – Refuge Headquarters. This is a first documented record for Fish Springs NWR of this species.

COUNTY: Juab County

LATILONG: 39.85806, -113.36694

ELEVATION: 4370 Feet

DISTANCE TO BIRD: ~10m at closest

OPTICS USED: 10 x 42 Leica Binoculars; Bushnell 60mm scope with 22-45x eyepiece.

WEATHER: Clear skies, calm wind, at dusk, ~70F at time of observation. The day had a high of ~80F and a low of ~50F.

LIGHT CONDITIONS: Low angle of setting sun, many minutes of study with sun partially or directly behind observer – during and after sunset. There was sufficient light to study this bird.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF BIRD:

This bird was observed for about one hour just before and after sunset. I arrived about 7PM at Fish Springs for the May - 2008 bird survey and after greeting the Refuge Manager Jay Banta I began surveying the headquarters area for migrants. I first spotted the bird in the housing area and studied it intensely. During the course of the next 30 minutes I informed Jay about the bird and we relocated it for him and to obtain a photograph (see attached photo that was taken under very low light conditions). Written field notes were made immediately after my first encounter and this report was written primarily from those notes and the accompanying photograph. After my initial observations I consulted a Sibley Field Guide to check for additional field marks that could be used to confirm identification and exclude other possible species.



**Black Phoebe photographed by JS with a Nikon D80 w/Tamron 200-500mm zoom lens. Photograph was processed by FSNWR employee Robert Sims.**

1. The overall shape/behavior of the bird was that of *Sayornis* species. The bird was distinctly bicolored, black above and white below. The bird gave a squat impression and had short legs.
2. The head was sooty black as were the breast and upper back. The head feathering gave a “peaked” head appearance. The lower back, wings, and tail were only slightly paler black.
3. The undertail coverts, vent area, and belly were white. The white on belly formed an inverted V-shape as it extended up into lower breast when viewed head-on). The black bib extended to lower breast – see photograph, and there was strong contrast between the black breast and white belly.
4. The bill was medium-sized and black – see photograph. The legs and feet were black.
5. The relatively long, black tail was often partially spread, or flared, (as shown in photo) and notched at the tip. The outer edges of the outer rectrices showed faint white.
6. The iris of eye was dark.

SONG OR CALL AND METHOD OF DELIVERY: This bird was not singing during the observation period.

BEHAVIOR: The bird was flying to and from a wooden fence, sallying for insects. When perched on the fence the bird frequently wagged its tail, characteristic of all *Sayornis* species.

HABITAT: The bird was observed in the housing area at Fish Springs NWR. This bird was observed mostly in a fenced yard area with a manicured lawn..

SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW WERE THEY ELIMINATED:

These are the most similar-looking *Sayornis* species that could be ruled out:

Says Phoebe: Say's Phoebe is grayish brown above, with orange brown belly and undertail-coverts. The head is slightly darker. Say's does not have the black bib. This species is common at FSNWR.

Eastern Phoebe: Eastern Phoebe has whitish to pale yellow on underparts; only crown is sooty black. Only one or two documented records from FSNWR.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILAR SPECIES: REFERENCES CONSULTED:

I've observed Black Phoebe a number of times, most recently in Washington County, Utah, and during many long ago trips to New Mexico and Arizona.

DESCRIPTION FROM: NOTES TAKEN AT TIME OF SIGHTING  , NOTES MADE LATER  , FROM MEMORY

OBSERVER: Jack Skalicky

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PERMISSION: I GIVE MY PERMISSION TO POST THIS SIGHTING RECORD ON THE INTERNET IN AN AREA:

OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC  , RESTRICTED TO THE RECORDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD: Jay Banta identified and observed the bird the same evening (May 9, 2008). Colby and Tom Neuman independently relocated and identified the bird the next morning (May 10, 2008).

DATE PREPARED: August 28, 2008.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: PHOTO  , DRAWING  , TAPE  , OTHER

RETURN THIS FORM TO:

UTAH BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE  
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OR EMAIL TO:

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