



Immature male Vermilion Flycatcher,

Jones Beach, Nassau Co., New York, 24-25 September 1987.

The crown and underparts are red, with a brown patch over the eyes; the nape and rump are brown; the lores, auriculars, back, tail and wings are dark brown, the latter with very pale brown feather edges and wing bars; the throat is pale pink lightly streaked red where it meets the chest; iris dark brown; bill black.

Photograph by Adrian Dignan.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES
49. VERMILION FLYCATCHER ON LONG ISLAND:
A FIRST NEW YORK STATE RECORD

JOHN BULL

During the afternoon of 24 September 1987, Pera Gorson of the Baldwin Bird Club and Chairwoman of the Conservation Committee of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, discovered a male Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) near the U. S. Coast Guard Station at the west end of Jones Beach, Nassau County, Long Island, New York. She notified Adrian Dignan about the bird that night and early the next morning, 25 September, Dignan went out and observed it at close range. An experienced photographer, he took numerous color pictures of the Vermilion Flycatcher. The slide from which the figure was made is on file with the New York State Avian Records Committee. Word of this great rarity quickly reached many birders far and wide. This striking bird obligingly remained in the vicinity the entire day and was seen by many observers, including the writer, and was also photographed by several other people. Unfortunately, it was not found the following two days — a weekend, when hordes of birders searched diligently for it, to no avail.

The Vermilion Flycatcher arrived with many other birds during the passage of a cold front accompanied by strong winds from the west-northwest. At one point both Si Schiff and I watched the Vermilion Flycatcher through the binoculars alongside a Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), a noteworthy observation in itself. During that second morning, in addition to those two species, several Eastern Kingbirds (*T. tyrannus*) and many individuals of Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) were nearby. These four species of flycatchers, plus warblers and other birds were kept busily engaged in consuming myriads of flies and mosquitoes which were all about. The conspicuous Vermilion Flycatcher was observed flying back and forth from signposts to mullein stalks and various shrubs of sumac, bayberry and beach plum.

This appears to be the first confirmed record of a mainly southwestern species along the seaboard of either the northeastern United States or that of Canada. It is otherwise unreported along the Atlantic coast north of coastal South Carolina where it has occurred along that coast on at least five different occasions, mostly from November to late January, including one collected 5 January 1956. Prior to those occurrences, the first proved record for the entire northeast was that of an inland specimen taken at Toronto, Ontario on 1 November 1949 (Auk, 1950,

67: 517). A Massachusetts report is of a sighting of "An adult male found on Plum Island, Essex County, on October 22, 1954, by" two observers. It was published in *The Birds of Massachusetts* in 1955 by Ludlow Griscom and Dorothy Snyder of the Peabody Museum at Salem, Mass. It was placed by them on their Hypothetical List on page 258. I know of no other reports of this species anywhere else on the northeast coast until the present one on Long Island.

According to the A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds (1983: 458), the breeding range of the Vermilion Flycatcher extends north and east to California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, western and central Texas and, in recent years to western Oklahoma. It winters north to the southern portions of the same states and east along the Gulf coast as far as central Florida.

Most interestingly, in an article in *The Kingbird* (1983, 33: 11) our Editor, Paul DeBenedictis was the only one of five active observers in the state to predict the occurrence of the Vermilion Flycatcher as an addition to the list of New York State birds!

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