



# WILDLIFE NOTES

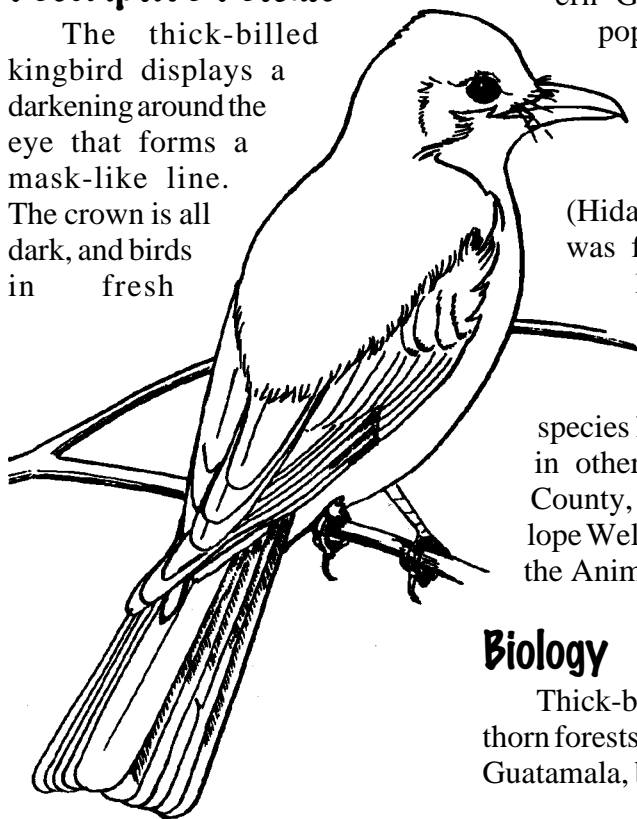
## Thick-billed kingbird

### *Tyrannus crassirostris*

Perched high in a canyon tree, the bird spies an insect flying past. Suddenly aloft, it sails forth to capture its meal in the remoteness of Guadalupe Canyon. A large flycatcher, the thick-billed kingbird is 6 1/2 inches in length with brown upper parts, a white throat, a gray breast, and pale yellow under parts. This kingbird's call is a strident "pitcheery," which differs from the low "chibeer" of Cassin's kingbird and the high, thin twitterings of the Western kingbird.

### Descriptive Details

The thick-billed kingbird displays a darkening around the eye that forms a mask-like line. The crown is all dark, and birds in fresh



plumage – acquired in late summer or early autumn – are brighter yellow below and more patterned above than in spring and early summer. The flycatcher's bill is flat, broad, and black in color. This bird has black feet and dark brown irises. It is heavier than the Western kingbird.

### Distribution

This kingbird occurs from southeastern Arizona and extreme southwestern New Mexico south through western Mexico to northern Guatemala. Northern populations are summer residents only. In New Mexico this bird summers in Guadalupe Canyon (Hidalgo County), where it was first recorded in June 1958. This is the basic habitat area for the thick-billed kingbird in the state, but the species has also been observed in other portions of Hidalgo County, specifically near Antelope Wells and in the foothills of the Animas Mountains.

### Biology

Thick-billed kingbirds inhabit thorn forests in western Mexico and Guatemala, but in the United States

they are confined to riparian habitats. The behavior of this bird is typical of other kingbirds and includes perching in the higher parts of trees and sailing out to capture insects on the wing. Thick-billed kingbirds are noisy and bickering, and they respond to predatory birds as fiercely as do other members of the flycatcher family. The nest is a frail cup of twigs and grasses placed from 35 to 50 feet above the ground. The eggs are whitish with dark brown spots, and the clutch size varies from three to five eggs.

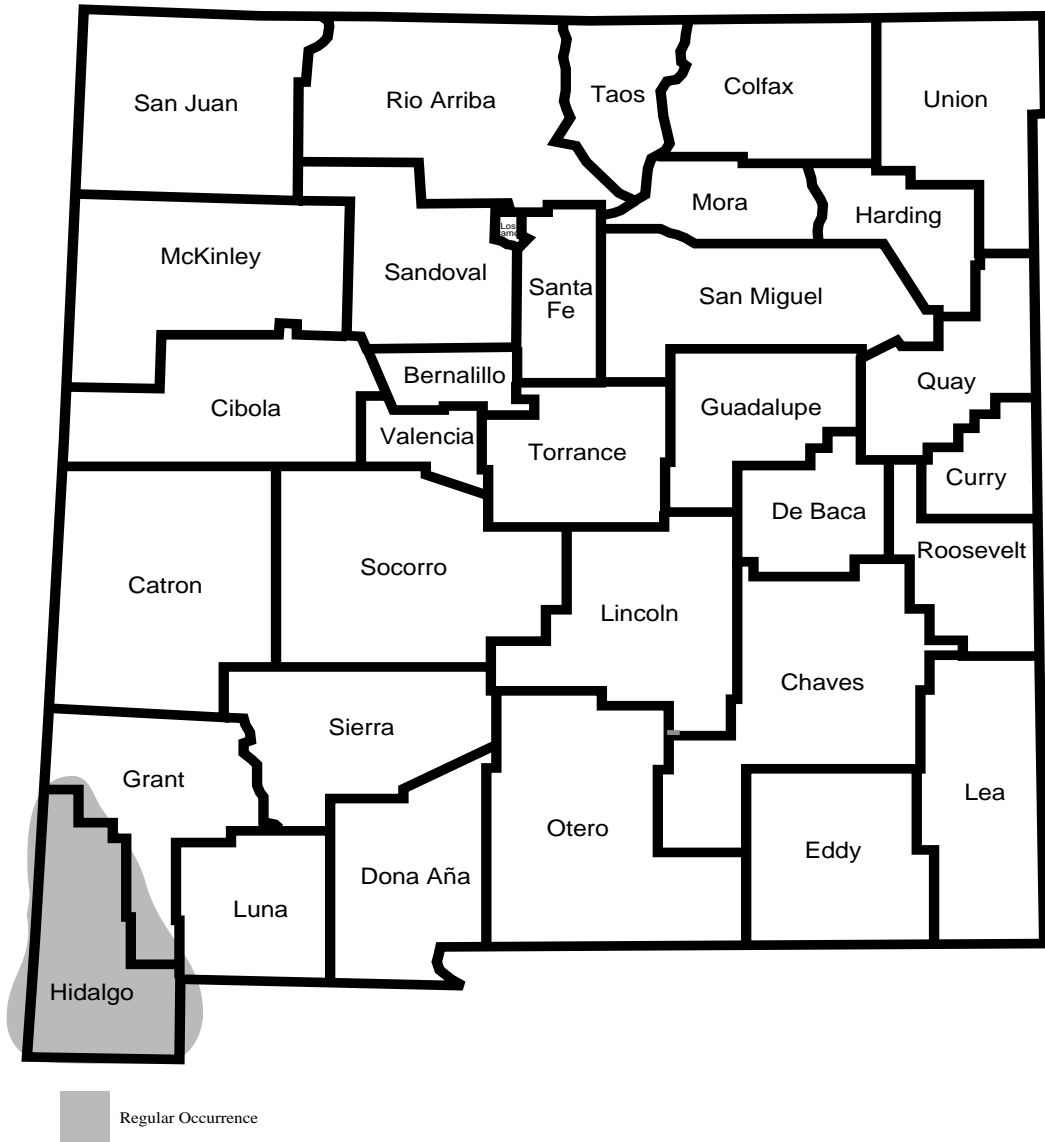
### Status

This bird appears to be reasonably common in Mexico, but in outlying areas it is often local and rare. Thick-billed kingbirds are regular summer residents in Guadalupe Canyon, with at least one or two pairs nesting in the New Mexico portion in most years.

### Conservation

Habitat protection and a ban on taking thick-billed kingbirds are essential to the conservation of the species in the state. Human disturbance is probably not a problem, as the birds nest and perch high above the ground.

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