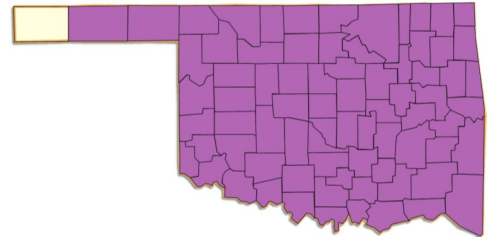




Scissor-tailed Flycatcher



In Oklahoma, late March is the time when start to be seen often are seen in along roadsides on fences, in open prairies dotted with trees and along tree-lined country roads. They also appear in open country around ranches and even small towns, where they perch on telephone lines, flagpoles and fences. Scissor-tailed flycatchers are considered Neotropical migrants – birds that spend their winters in Central and South America, returning to North America to nest and raise young. Scissor-tailed flycatchers are acrobatic foragers; birds often dart from their perches into the air in pursuit of flying insects such as bees and wasps, or drop to the ground to capture grasshoppers and spiders in the grass. They consume a greater proportion of grasshoppers, crickets and other ground-dwelling insects than any other Oklahoma flycatcher. At times grasshoppers may comprise more than 50 percent of their diet. Flycatchers are unable to digest the wings, legs and other hard body parts of their insect prey and periodically regurgitate these items as a small pellet. Soon after the birds arrive in the state, males begin their famous “sky dance,” a popular sight along roadsides during spring and early summer. This elaborate courtship display is performed by the male to attract the attention of potential mates. After climbing to about 100 feet in the air, the male makes a series of v-shaped flights. He soars rapidly up through the air and then plunges down in an erratic, zig-zag course while uttering a rolling, cackling call. His graceful actions are further accentuated by his long, flowing tail.

Where to see Scissor-tailed Flycatchers: Can be found throughout the entire Great Plains Trail which is why OWPFA selected the “Scissortail” as the Trail icon.