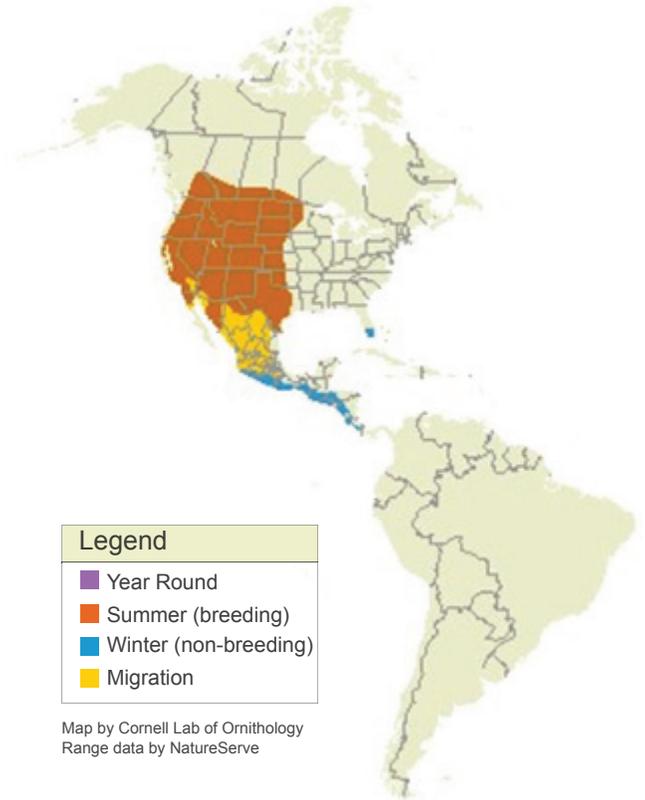


Western Kingbird

Tyrannus verticalis

An eye-catching bird with ashy gray and lemon-yellow plumage, the Western Kingbird is a familiar summertime sight in open habitats across western North America. This large flycatcher sallies out to capture flying insects from conspicuous perches on trees or utility lines, flashing a black tail with white edges. Western Kingbirds are aggressive and will scold and chase intruders (including Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels) with a snapping bill and flared crimson feathers they normally keep hidden under their gray crowns.



Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Western Kingbirds are fairly large flycatchers with large heads and broad shoulders. They have heavy, straight bills, long wings, and a medium-length, square-tipped tail.

Color Pattern

Western Kingbirds are gray-headed birds with a yellow belly and a whitish chest and throat. The tail is black with white outer tail feathers that are especially conspicuous in flight.

Behavior

Easily found perched upright on fences and utility lines, Western Kingbirds hawk insects from the air or fly out to pick prey from the ground. They ferociously defend their territories with wing-fluttering, highly vocal attacks. Vocalizations include long series of squeaky, bubbling calls as well as single, accented kip notes.

Habitat

Western Kingbirds live in open habitats, where they perch on utility lines, fences, and trees. They prefer valleys and lowlands, including grasslands, deserts, sagebrush, agricultural fields, and open woodlands. They are typically found below about 7,000 feet in elevation.

Cool Facts

- The Western Kingbird was originally known as the Arkansas Kingbird, but scientists changed its name to acknowledge its wide range across western North America.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 7.9 - 9.4 inches
- Wingspan - 14.6 - 15.7 inches
- Weight - 1.3 - 1.6 ounces