

*Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form*

CBRC File # - **2002-77**

RESULTS \_\_\_\_\_

Species (common and scientific names)

SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER *Myiodynastes luteiventris*

Date(s) of observation:

9/18/03 and 9/19/03

Number of birds seen:

1

Sex:

unknown

Plumage:

I think adult based on white edges to wing coverts and lack of rust on wings.

Exact Location:

West side of Adobe Creek Reservoir in tamarisks along old inflow canal.

County:

Bent

Nearest Town:

Las Animas

Elevation:

4100 feet

Length of observation:

Observed 4 times over two day period. 4 hours total

Time(s) of observation:

twice during afternoon on 9/18, morning and afternoon on 9/19

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you:

I was alone when I found it, returned later on 9/18 with Stan Oswald on 9/18. On 9/19, saw with Tamie Bulow, Lisa Edwards, Norm Erthal, Peter Gent, Joey Kellner, Tony Leukering, Ira Sanders, Dick Schottler, Larry Semo, Andrew Spencer, Steve Stachowiak, John Vanderpoel, Glen Walbek

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): Rachel Hopper, SeEtta Moss.

Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observer(s) position: Dry and calm, mostly sunny, 55 to 80 F.

Optical equipment used: unaided vision, 10X40 B&L Custom. Spotting Scope not needed.

Distance to bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted):  
As close as 6 feet!

Was bird photographed?

Yes

If so, are you submitting photos?

Yes

Who took the photographs?

Duane Nelson, Andrew Spencer, Tony Leukering, others.

Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred:

An old canal inflow. Over the past wet cycle, most cottonwoods, willows and tamarisk trees had died from flooding. There was a new crop of tamarisk, up to 5 feet tall, in the canal bottom. On the west side of a huge prairie reservoir (Adobe Creek Reservoir), the canal was miles from civilization or contiguous wooded habitat.

Describe bird's behaviors, particularly those used in supporting identification, e.g., flying, feeding, habits:

I was walking along the canal, mainly to revisit habitat that had been alive with birds when the trees were still alive. I was there after taking down informational signs pertaining to Least Terns and Piping Plovers as their nesting season ended.

The bird was perching motionless on a tamarisk skeleton about 5 feet above the ground when I found it. It was in plain sight, and did not flush even when I accidentally approached within 10 feet when I found it. It repeatedly sallied out from it's perch, capturing large insects, and repeatedly returning to the same or similar open perches.

After I observed it for a few minutes, I rushed back to my truck to get my camera. I knew it was a flycatcher, but was unsure if it was a Sulphur-bellied, or some even less-likely streaked flycatcher from Central or South America.

I took a roll of 24 slides with my Pentax K1000 camera with 400 mm Sigma 5.6 APO lens, as the bird continued to be cooperative, always sallying out for insects, then sitting inconspicuously on mid-height vegetation in plain sight. I then headed back to Las Animas to look at field guides, try to confirm ID, and report to the Colorado birding community ASAP.



DESCRIPTION: (include size, shape, group and kinship with similar species, plumage. Include all features seen, whether they were important to ID or not.

I was first drawn to the bird by the striking face pattern, with a broad white, lightly-flecked line beginning above the bill, and extending to behind the dark eye. The eye was in a patch of medium brown that extended from behind the bill to behind the eye. The ear coverts were also brown. Below the eye, from the gape, narrowly to the back of the ear coverts, was another white-flecked, broad area that at some angles appeared to join the upper patch behind the ear coverts. Just anterior to the eye, there was a peach hue to a patch on the lower face patch, as if the bird were blushing. The bird, at first glance, had a dark, heavy, sturdy bill (hooked at the tip of the upper mandible), a large-looking head, and looked only slightly smaller than an American Robin, or similar in size to a Kingbird. The tail appeared to be shorter than those of Kingbirds.

The crown was darker brown than the supercilium, and boldly marked with dark brown streaks. The neck looked to be a cool brown with white flecks at some angles, and lightly streaked from other angles. The back was boldly streaked, with thinner white streaks on a medium-brown back. Likewise, the wing coverts, scapulars, primaries and secondaries were all medium brown with whitish edges.

The upper tail coverts were a brilliant rusty color, as were the outer feathers on the short tail. The interior feathers on the upper tail were nearly the same cool-brown color as the back and wings.

The throat was boldly streaked, on a whitish background. The breast was subtly yellow, and not always discernible as yellow, although with good looks, always yellowish mid-belly. The breast was strongly streaked with bold dark brown vertical stripes. The legs were a dark, almost black, color. The bird was silent.

SIMILAR SPECIES: (how were similar species eliminated):

Two other "streaked" flycatchers have occurred in North America north of Mexico.

1. Piratic Flycatcher *Legatus leucophaeus*. Only 6 inches long, with an unstreaked back, clear throat and tiny bill.
2. Variegated Flycatcher *Empidonax varius*. Smaller, smaller billed than Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, less distinct streaking on back.

One other migrant streaked flycatcher, the Streaked Flycatcher *Myiodynastes maculatus* (migratory, Central America) was the most similar candidate. The

Streaked Flycatcher is suffused with yellow on the head (which was absent in the Colorado bird), has no yellow on the belly (which the Colorado bird had) and has rufous on the wings (absent on the Colorado bird).

Previous experience: with this species and similar species.  
I have seen Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers on several occasions in southeast Arizona.

Resources used for identification:

National Geographic Guide (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)

Sibley Guide to Birds

Peterson Guide to Mexican Birds, Birds of Mexico and Central America by Irby Davis.

Report made from notes taken at time of observation and inspection of photographs I took.

Date report submitted:

2/25/03

Report made and prepared by:

Duane Nelson

342 E. 6<sup>th</sup> St.

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COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # **2002-77**

NEW STATE RECORD   X   UNUSUAL RECORD       

**Species:** Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*)

**Date:** 19 September 2002      **Number seen:** one      **Sex:** ?

**Plumage:** difficult to tell, but apparently molting from Def. Alternate to Def. Basic (see below)

**Locality:** west side of Adobe Creek Res., (Blue Lake), approx. 13T 0651067 4234677 (NAD27)

**Elevation:** ~4130'      **Nearest town:** Las Animas      **County:** Bent

**Time observed:** late afternoon/early evening      **Duration of observation:** >15 minutes

**Description:** On my second chase to see this bird, that Duane Nelson found on the 18<sup>th</sup>, I finally saw it. The bird foraged in relatively open habitat, dominated by Tamarisk, sallying out from perches, often to the ground. The pictures that I have got are sufficient to identify the bird, so I will spend much of my time here discussing the age of the bird and separation from other identification contenders: Streaked, Variegated, and Piratic flycatchers.

The bird was obviously one of the tropical streaked flycatchers. The sheer size of the bird (the same size as a close by Western Kingbird) eliminates the two small species of this group that have occurred in the United States: Variegated and Piratic. Additionally, the small species can be ruled out by head pattern (neither has dark streaking in the superciliary or the malar streak) and tail coloration (neither has such obvious rufous rectrices).

So, that leaves us with the trickier separation of Streaked and Sulphur-bellied (SBFL), the former not having been documented north of Mexico, but like Sulphur-bellied, a



tropical migrant. However, with these photos (here and on the next page), one can see the clinching field marks that easily eliminate Streaked from consideration: the white superciliary, the strong, black lateral throat stripes, the minimal pale at the base of the mandible, and the heavily-streaked chin and throat. Streaked Flycatcher has a yellow cast to the superciliary, weak lateral throat stripes, extensive pale coloration at the base of the mandible, and a lightly-streaked chin and throat.

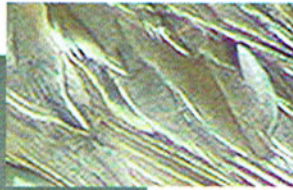


Now for the age. According to Pyle (1997), adult SBFL conduct their pre-basic molt July- February, with the body molt conducted on the breeding grounds and the flight-feather molt conducted on the winter grounds. Thus, adults in fall should have well-worn flight feathers, even if body molt is fairly advanced. Immatures do not conduct a flight-feather molt, but since those feathers are only a few months old in September, those feathers should still appear rather fresh. The primary coverts in adults are darker than are the bases of the primaries; in immatures, these coverts are paler than the primary bases. Additionally, the black shaft streak on the outermost rectrix (R6) is thin and short on immatures and wider and longer on adults.



Fortunately, my pictures show both features to rather good advantage.

On the larger wing picture, the and brown, and the bases contrast



primaries are obviously worn, frayed, rather well with the darker primary coverts - this is typical of adults. In both of the wing pictures (one an enlargement of a section of the other), one new, blacker-centered, yellowy-fringed greater covert is visible; I am not sure how this relates to age, as both adults and immatures probably initiate greater covert molt from the inside. In the enlarged tail picture, the long and wide black shaft streak typical of an adult is quite visible (though out of focus). I have provided a copy of the diagram in Pyle (1997) that shows this

feature (Fig. 165).

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** none heard

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I had previously seen ~25 SBFLs (Arizona, Mexico, and Costa Rica), ~50 Streaked Flycatchers (Costa Rica), ~15 Piratic Flycatchers (Costa Rica, Panama), and one Variegated Flycatcher (Ontario).

**Light conditions:** sun mostly behind me

**Optical equipment used:** Swarovski 8.5x42 & Leica 32x

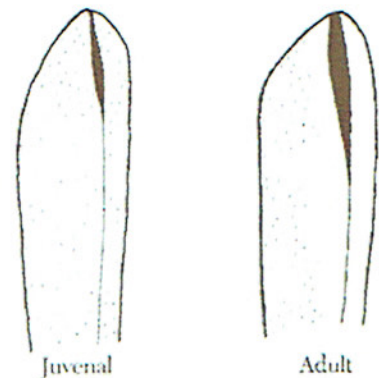
**Distance, and how estimated:** closest approach (by the bird!) of ~1 foot; typically 5-10 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Duane Nelson, Larry Semo, Peter Gent, John Vanderpoel

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** Stan Oswald and others



Notice long black shaft streak on R6.





**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** Nikon Coolpix 995 through a Leica 32x

**List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:**

**a) at time of observation:** none

**b) after observation:** Howell and Webb (1995) and Pyle (1997)

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:**



**Address:** Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting  
Brighton, CO 80603

Lane,

**Date report was written:** Written on 15 January 2004 from notes that I wrote the evening of the sighting and from reviewing the pictures

Literature Cited:

Howell, S.N.G. and S. Webb. 1995. A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, England.

Pyle, P. 1997. Identification Guide to North American Birds, part I. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.

2002-77

**Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form**

|   |                                 |   |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| CBRC FILE #:  |                                 |   |
| RESULTS:  |                                 |   |
| Species: (Common Name) <b>Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher</b>  |                                 | (Scientific Name) <b>Myiodynastes luteiventris</b>  |
| Date(s) of occurrence: <b>09-19-2002</b>  |                                 |   |
| Number of birds seen: <b>One</b>  | Sex: <b>Unknown</b>             | Plumage: <b>Adult</b>   |
| Exact location: <b>Adobe Creek Res. (or Blue Lake)</b>  |                                 |   |
| County: <b>Bent</b>   | Nearest town: <b>Las Animas</b> | Elevation: <b>4100 ft.</b>  |
| Length of observation: <b>15 minutes</b>  |                                 | Time(s) of observation: <b>Approx. 3:00 p.m.</b>  |
| Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: <b>SeEtta Moss</b>  |                                 |   |
| Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): <b>MOB</b>   |                                 |   |
| Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observers position: <b>Sunny &amp; Calm</b>  |                                 |   |
| Optical equipment used: <b>Leica 8 X 42 Binoculars and Leica Televid 77 Spotting Scope with 20-60X zoom.</b>  |                                 |   |
| Distance to bird(s) (estimated, unless otherwise noted): <b>15 ft.</b>  |                                 |   |
| Was (Were) bird(s) photographed? <b>Yes</b>   |                                 | If so, are you submitting photos? Yes. <b>Pics\SBFL.jpg, Pics\SBFL1.jpg, Pics\SBFL3.jpg</b> |
| Who took the photograph(s)? <b>Me.</b>  |                                 |   |
| Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred: <b>Lowland riparian</b>   |                                 |   |
| Describe the bird's (birds') behaviors, particularly behaviors that were used in supporting the identification, e.g., flying, feeding, habits: <b>Sitting in the open and occasionally flycatching</b>  |                                 |   |
| DESCRIPTION -- <b>This is the most important part of this report.</b> Include in these details the overall size and shape of the bird and give as many plumage details as possible, even including those that you feel might not have relevance to the specific identification. Please fill out this portion even if photos are accompanying your report. <i>Important Note: Duane Nelson Found and ID'ed this bird. Please see photos.</i> |                                 |   |
| Describe the bird's (birds') call(s) and/or song(s), if noted:  |                                 |   |
| SIMILAR SPECIES -- <b>This is another critical part of your report.</b> Please discuss how you eliminated similar species from consideration: <b>See photos</b>   |                                 |   |
| What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? <b>I have seen them in Arizona</b>   |                                 |   |
| List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how these influenced your identification (during and after observation): <b>None</b>   |                                 |   |
| This report was made from (check one) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>notes made from photographs</b>  |                                 |   |
| Date and time of written report: <b>02/02/2004</b>  |                                 |   |
| Reporting observer: <b>Rachel Hopper</b>  |                                 | Signature: <i>Rachel Hopper</i>   |
| Reporting observer's address: <b>1721 Cottonwood Pt. Dr.</b>  |                                 |   |
| City: <b>Ft. Collins</b>  | State: <b>CO</b>                | Zip: <b>80524</b>   |



2002-77

Rachel Hopper

