

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

ACCEPTED (7-0)NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD XRec'd 12.98**Species:** Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*)**Date:** 23 May 1998**Number seen:** one**Sex:** male**Plumage:** Basic I**Locality:** Little Washington Work Center, Comanche N.G.**Elevation:** 4365'**Nearest town:** Springfield**County:** Baca**Time observed:** intermittently between about 7:45 - 10:00; in hand about 20:25 - 20:55 MDT on 23 May and 7:00 - 7:20 MDT on 24 May**Duration of observation:** total of about 40 minutes in field, 50 minutes in hand

Description: While birding around in Dan Svingen's yard at the Little Washington Work Center, and shortly after I had gotten the three other observers present (see list, below) on a female Hooded Warbler I had found, Dan alerted me to the fact that he had heard a bird that sounded an awful lot like an Eastern Wood-Pewee (EAWP). There had been an obvious influx of pewees that morning (5-6 present compared to none the day before), so I started scrutinizing pewees carefully. We talked about what plumage characters were necessary to clinch the identification and I brought up lower mandible color, breast band color and pattern, undertail coverts pattern, and back color. I also mentioned the possibility that pewees could sing each others' songs, or at least something like each others' songs, as a way of forcing us to nail the plumage characters down. We eventually refound the bird (numerous times) and studied its plumage. We also heard it sing numerous times (>20); in fact, it was usually the way we refound the bird after it had flown off and gotten lost once again. Dan and I both took field notes at one point when the bird stayed put for some time and we could study it carefully. I had been running one mist net sporadically for a few days in the yard. I added a second net in hopes of catching the bird, which I eventually managed late in the day. I took in-hand photos of the bird the next morning, as it was dark by the time I was finished processing the bird after catching it, so I kept it overnight.

The bird was an obvious pewee (upright stance, greenish upperparts, paler underparts, no eyering, thin wingbars, long primary extension, short legs) with a gray-brown head, relatively bright green back, and greenish sides and flanks. The bird was distinctly crested, but the crest was very short. I saw the bill well and the lower mandible was almost entirely orangish-yellow (the upper was all dark), with only about the distal 1 mm being dusky [in hand, I measured the length of the dusky tip at 2mm]. The back was considerably greener than that on nearby Western Wood-Pewees (WEWP). The bird's breast band was grayish-brown with a distinct break down the middle of the breast, caused by intrusion of the whitish of the throat from above and the whitish-yellow of the belly from below connecting in mid-breast. The sides were brownish with a strong green cast. In the hand, the sides looked even greener. The wings and tail were dark and the greater and median secondary coverts were thinly tipped with whitish-yellow. The eyes and legs were dark. No eyering was visible in the field. The primaries extended well down the tail (almost 1/2-way).

In-hand measurements (from Pyle (1997)): Formula A--tip of longest uppertail covert - tail tip = 32.2 mm; Formula B--longest primary - longest secondary = 18.4 mm; A-B = 13.8 mm (for WEWP, this value should be <6.5, for EAWP, >6.5).

The combination of song, back color, chest pattern, and bill pattern eliminates WEWP. The size, bill size, underparts pattern, and song eliminate Olive-sided Flycatcher and Greater and Tropical pewees. The short legs, long primary extension (formula B, above), the extension of the wingtips down the tail, and song eliminate Willow Flycatcher.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): The bird sang often (>20 times), mostly giving a whistled "pee-aa-weeeee" that rose on the last syllable. Never did it give the brusque, shorter song typical of WEWP. A few times it gave a shorter, whistled "pee-urrr", with the final syllable dropping in pitch.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen and/or heard 100s of both wood-pewee species, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Tropical Pewee. I have also seen and/or heard 10s of Greater Pewee and 100s of Willow Flycatchers. I have also banded numerous (>30) of each of the two wood-pewee species, a few Olive-sided Flycatchers, and 50+ Willow Flycatchers.

Light conditions: sun variable due to many restightings in various bird-observer-sun orientations

Optical equipment used: 7x42 Zeiss, 30x Kowa, and 20/10 eyeballs

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance in field at 35 feet

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Dan Svingen, Ila Svingen, Jim Bradley

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none

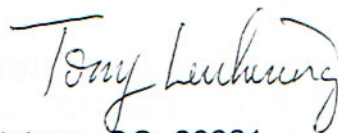
If photographed, type of equipment and film: I photographed the bird in-hand and am enclosing copies of slides.

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

a) at time of observation: none **b) after observation:** After initial sighting, we checked Pyle (1997) for suggestions, but this had no influence on my report.

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:



Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

This report was written on 29 May and 9 October 1998 from field notes taken while watching the bird and from reviewing in-hand slides that I took of the bird which finally (!) arrived in October.

Literature Cited:

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

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*)

✓
C-13-98

DATE/TIME:

May 23, 1998. Approximately 0730-1000 hours (total observation time in that period totaled about 30 minutes).

NUMBER/AGE/SEX OF BIRD:

1, unknown age when seen (later determined to be second-year bird by Tony), unknown gender.

LOCATION:

Comanche National Grassland, Little Washington Work Center (T32N, R46W, Sec. 4 SW), Baca County, Colorado. Approximately 7 miles south of Springfield, CO.

OBSERVERS/OPTICS:

Dan Svingen, Ila Svingen, Tony Leukering, and Jim Bradley. 60x zoom Kowa Spotting Scope and 8x42 binos (Dan), 8x42 binos (Ila). Other observers also used binoculars, but specifications not known.

DESCRIPTION DETAILS:

Tony and I were birding different parts of the yard and had each found a number of newly arrived Western Wood-Pewees (WEWP). I heard a pewee that I believed to be an Eastern Wood-Pewee (EAWP). Because it has been several years since I had last heard this species, I alerted Tony and asked that he listen for the call. A short time later (about 20 minutes) he too heard the bird. Tony, Jim, and I then followed the pewee around the yard for the next two hours. We were able to study its plumage and scrutinize its call at length. Ila joined in the fun intermittently, and was able to see and hear the bird. When the bird flew from one spot to another, we usually lost track of it and had to start searching all over again. Interestingly, this bird was so distinctively marked that we were able to pick it out from its' companion WEWP on a number of occasions. Tony and I took field notes while watching the birds through binoculars and spotting scope respectively. At approximately 2000 hours, Tony mist-netted the bird and Jim, Tony and I were able to study it in hand that evening and early the next morning. I typed my field notes into this format May 25, 1998.

WEATHER/LIGHT:

Weather specifics not noted in field notes, but if memory serves, the morning of May 23 was high overcast and cool (about 50 degrees fahrenheit), clearing and warming to high-70's by the end of the observation period. Color discretion judged to be good to very good.

DISTANCE:

For most of observation period, bird was about 40 yards away, with distance varying between 10-200 yards (when beyond 50 yards or so, the two pewee species were

separable by voice cues only - i.e. the distinctive markings on this individual EAWP were not discernible).

BEHAVIOR:

Bird spent most of its time perched on dead branches in clear flight lanes, approximately 7-30' above the ground. The EAWP associated loosely with WEWP, and on a few occasions perched within a few feet of a WEWP. Several times the bird was attacked by WEWP, and usually lost the encounters (there was typically 2 or even 3 WEWP involved).

OVERALL IMPRESSION/SIZE/SHAPE:

Bird had the typical body shape and posture of the wood-pewees and Empidonax flycatchers (drab brown/gray/olive/buff coloring, large head, small bill, small size (about 5"), and erect posture when perched). Bird was judged 10% bigger (in body size) than a Willow Flycatcher, but was the same size as its companion Western Wood-Pewees (during observation, the two species were oft directly comparable).

HEAD:

Bill large and long for a small flycatcher, triangular in shape when seen from above or below. Upper mandible very dark gray and strongly hooked. Upper mandible had a raised central ridge, running from forehead to bill tip. In cross-section, the upper mandible would be triangular, while lower mandible would be mostly flat. This detail noted in-hand only. Facial bristles noted while bird was in-hand. Lower mandible judged to be completely yellow-orange in-field, but in-hand, a small dark tip was apparent, encompassing perhaps the distal 10% of the bill.

Crown raised into slight crest. In-field, crown seen as brown-gray, with slight contrast to nape. Nape color not noted in field, but in-hand in excellent light, it was striking how grayish the nape looked - forming a gray break between the brown-gray crown and olive mantle. This degree of contrast not noted in-field. Bird had a dark eye, and dark brown face, grading lighter ventrally. Light throat contrasted with darker face and upper breast band.

UPPERPARTS:

Mantle dark olive (green highlights most apparent when bird not in shade). Exposed remiges on perched bird brown-gray broadly edged with buff. Two buffy wingbars, created by light edging of median and greater upperwing coverts. Primary extension not noted in-field, but seen as about 1.5 bill-lengths in-hand. Rump dull brown.

UNDERPARTS:

Dark dull olive upper breast band extended down sides, forming a "vest" pattern. Vest was broken by a dull yellow midline stripe, estimated to be about 0.5" wide, extending from throat to belly. In-hand, this midline stripe did not seem to extend anteriorly all-the-way to the throat. Legs very dark gray. Very light buff undertails coverts. In-hand, the undertail covert feathers were seen to have faint light brown feather centers.

TAIL:

Tail was brown on dorsum; tail ventrum color not noted in-field. In-hand, tail ventrum seen as light brown with a grayish cast, appearing concolor with ventral surface of remidges.

VOCALIZATIONS:

The only song I heard from the EAWP was a loud, smooth, slurred, rising whistle "p!pweweeeee", unaccompanied by the customary downward "pee-yerr". This song was very dissimilar to the falling (not rising) burry, slurred "pizz!-urrr" of the WEWP. At one point, Tony and I were on opposite sides of a tree looking at the EAWP in front of us. The bird called, then immediately after, Tony pressed the "play" button on his tape recorder, broadcasting the first EAWP call on the National Geographic Society's "Guide to bird sounds" tape cassette. Tony's appraisal was "perfect!", meaning that the bird and the tape (heard within a few seconds of each other) were a perfect match. I agreed.

HABITAT:

Residential yard along US Highway 287. Bird was most frequently found in the 30 or so deciduous trees (elm spcs.), all about 50' tall, surrounding the house. The yard also contains numerous junipers, and a few ponderosa pine. The bird also used a juniper-dominated shelterbelt bordering the homestead.

IDENTIFICATION:

Voice diagnostic and eliminates all i.d. contenders, the most problematic being Western Wood-Pewee. Most Empidonax flycatchers further eliminated by lack of bold eyering, strong "vested" ventrum, and relatively dull wingbars. Plumage details that helped distinguish this individual EAWP from its companion WEWP were: much lighter ventral surface of lower mandible, olive (not flat brown) back, dark olive (not dark brown-gray) upper breastband, obvious midline break in breastband, and whiter throat.

OBSERVER EXPERIENCE

I have seen thousands of both pewee species over the last 20 years, having lived in both excellent EAWP habitat (in eastern ND) and excellent WEWP habitat (in MT, ID, and WY). The most scrutiny I have given the species pair however, was in sorting through EAWP in ND in hopes of finding WEWP. I don't remember the last time I spent 30 minutes studying a single wood-pewee. I last heard EAWP in 1994 (ND).

REMARKS:

Attempts to tape-record this bird were unsuccessful.

Dan Svigen
Springfield Colorado
June 13, 1998

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*)

red 6-20-98 ✓

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cc: M. Janos, June 13, 1998

cc: T. Leukering, May 28, 1998

cc: B. Percival, June 13, 1998

cc: R. Stevens, June 13, 1998

Daniel N. Swinger

De Swinger

*PO Box 271
Springfield CO 81073*

*(Tony Leukering and Jim Bradley unavailable for
signatures)*