

# NOTE ON THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

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# TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

B3 CLASS 2025

CONTOPUS  
FLYCATCHERS  
(PEWEES)

Do Kings Play Chess  
On Fine Green Silk

Order, Family, Genus, Species

Domain: **Eukarya**

Kingdom: **Anamalia**

Phylum: **Chordata**

Class: **Aves**

Order: **Passeriformes**

Family: **Tyrannidae**

**Contopus**  
(4)

**Myiarchus**  
(6)

**Tyrannus**  
(9)

**Sayornis**  
(3)

**Empidonax**  
(11)

**8 other genera**  
(~1 species each)

“Flycatchers”

Genus

**TAXONOMY**  
**(THE TREE OF LIFE)**

# BINOMIAL NOMENCLATURE (GENUS, SPECIES)

Little-uns

Western Wood Pewee  
**(*Contopus sordidulus*)**  
(mean)

***Contopus***  
(short footed)

Eastern Wood Pewee  
**(*Contopus virens*)**  
(green)

Olive-sided Flycatcher  
**(*Contopus cooperi*)**  
(William Cooper (1798-1864) US zoologist,  
collector, conchologist, founding member of the  
Lyceum of Natural History, New York,

**Greater Pewee**  
**(*Contopus pertinax*)**  
(obstinent, stubborn)

Big-uns

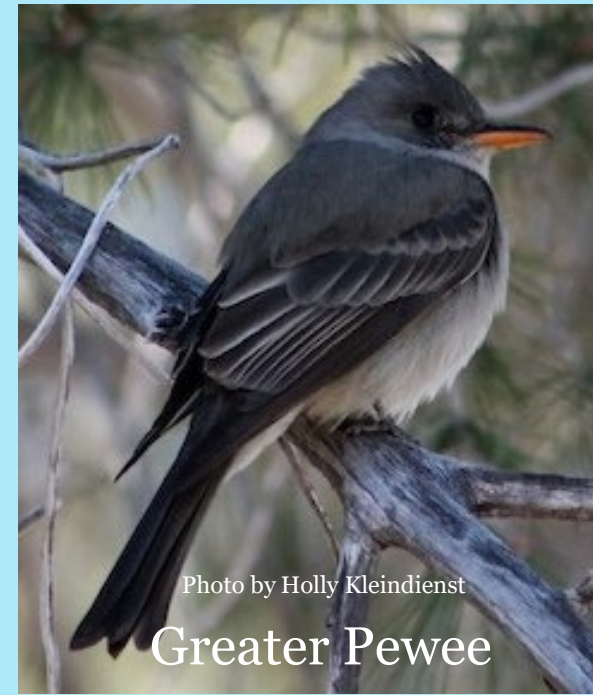
# CONTOPUS GENUS COMPARISON



Little-uns



Big-uns



# CONFUS-ERS

Photo by Darren Clark

Western Wood-pewee

Photo by Cory Calaghan

Eastern Wood-pewee

Corey C.

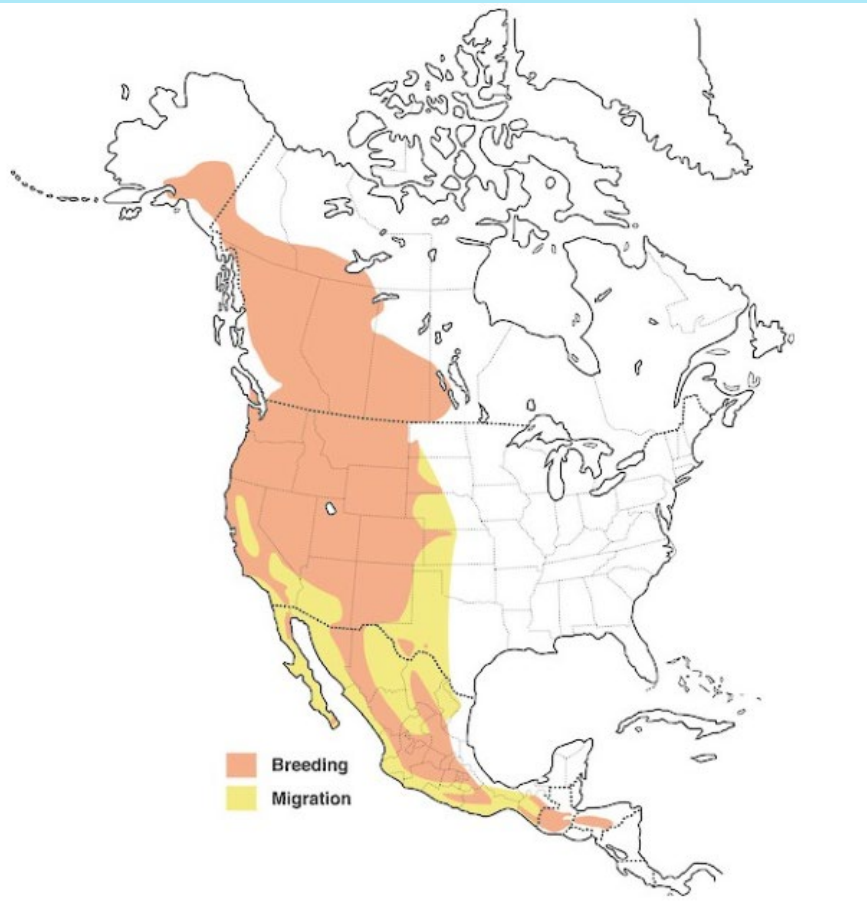
Eastern Phoebe

Photo by Brad Imhloff

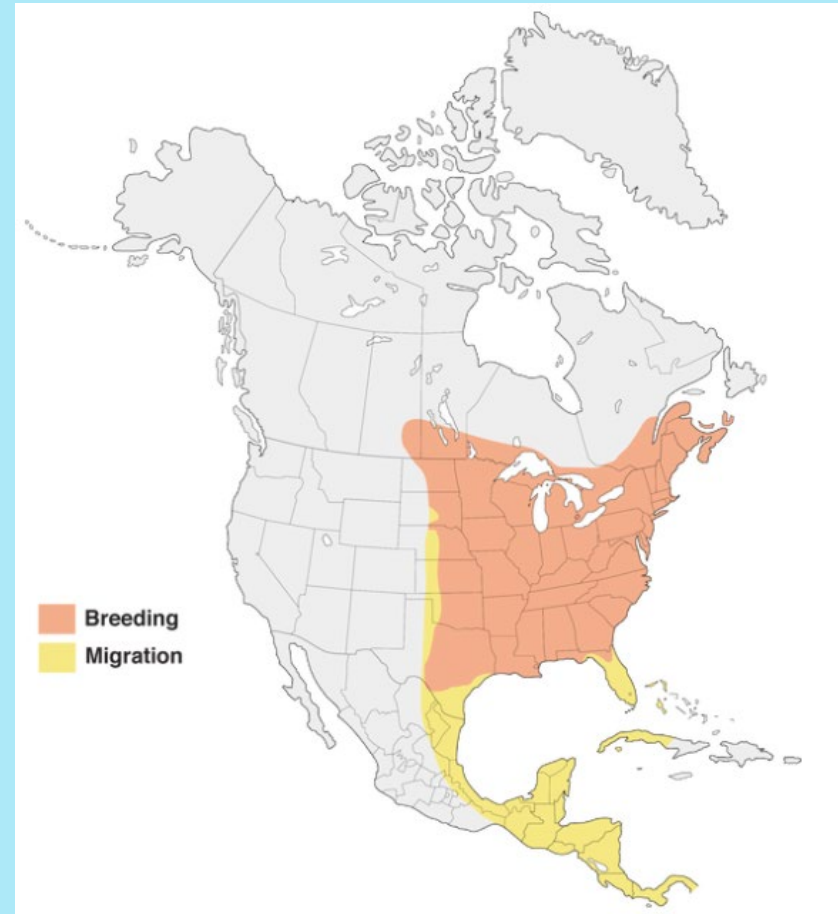
Empid

Photo by Brenden Klick

# WHERE/WHEN? RANGE

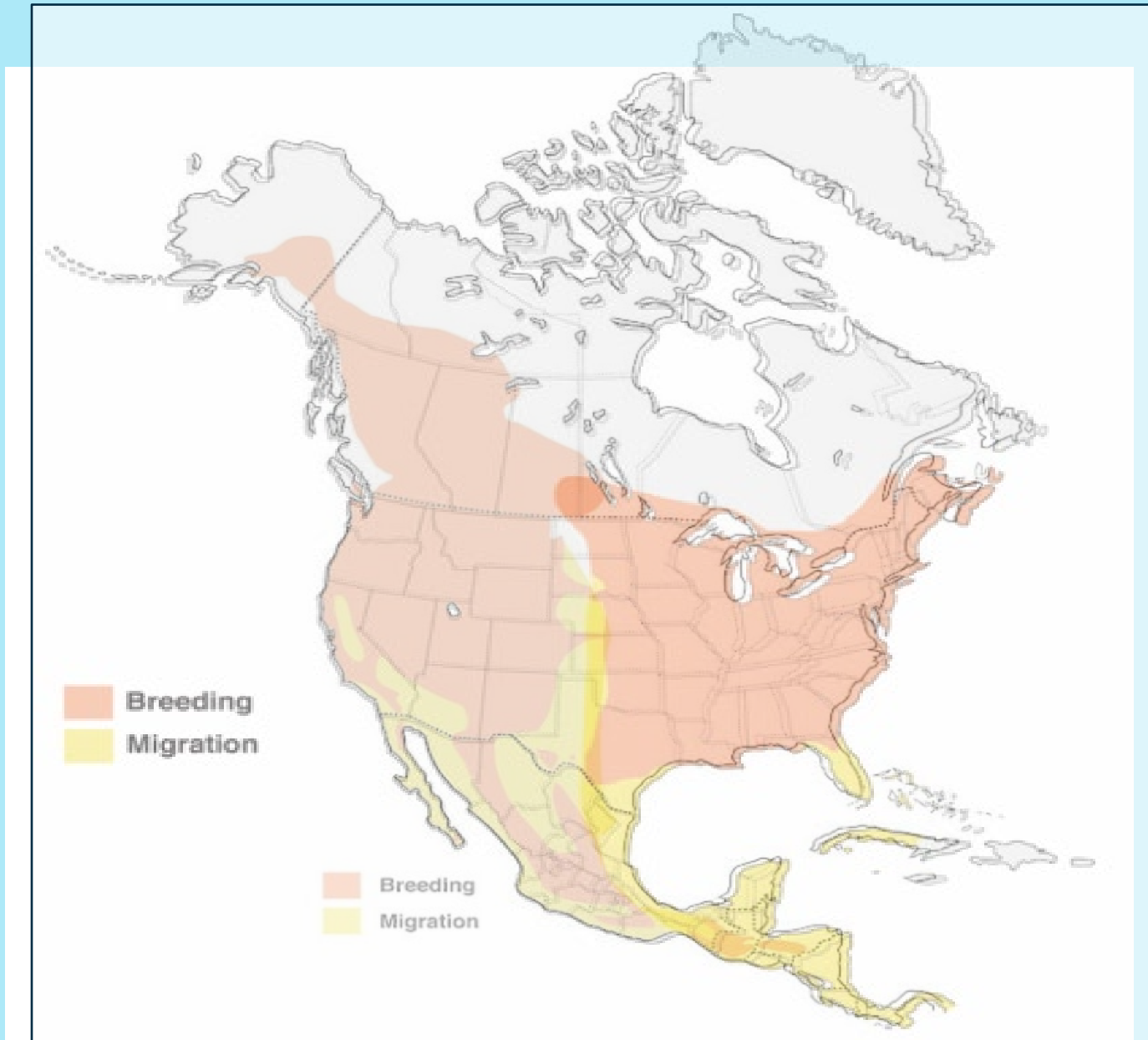


Western Wood-pewee



Eastern Wood-pewee

# WHERE/WHEN? RANGE



Western Wood-pewee

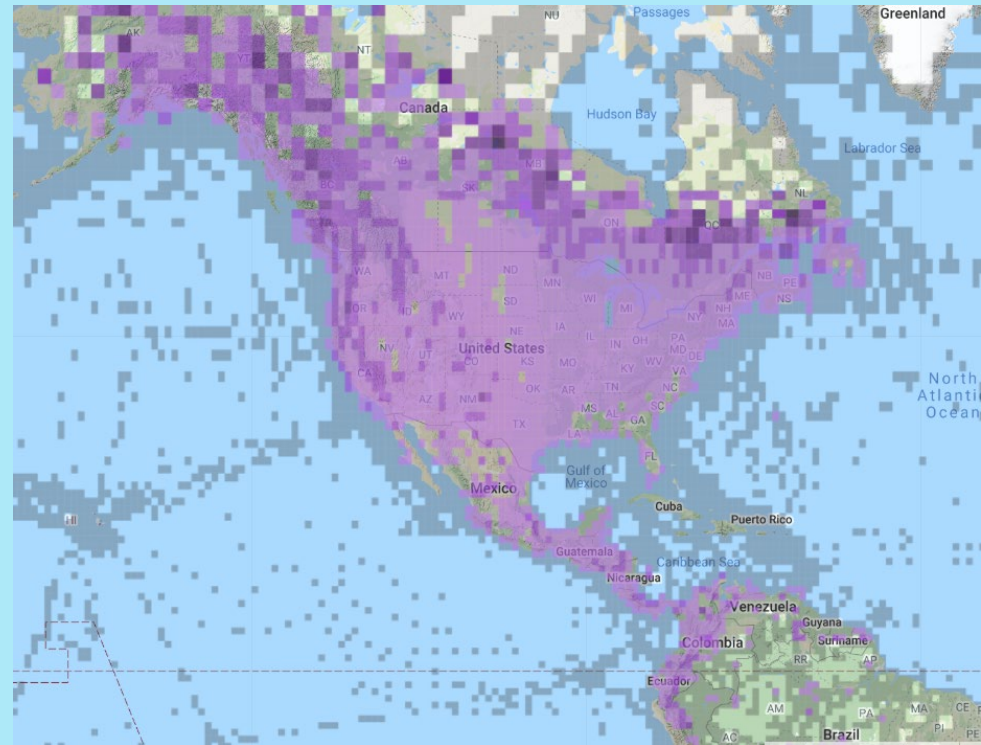
Eastern Wood-pewee

# WHERE/WHEN? RANGE

Anyone notice a problem  
with this map?

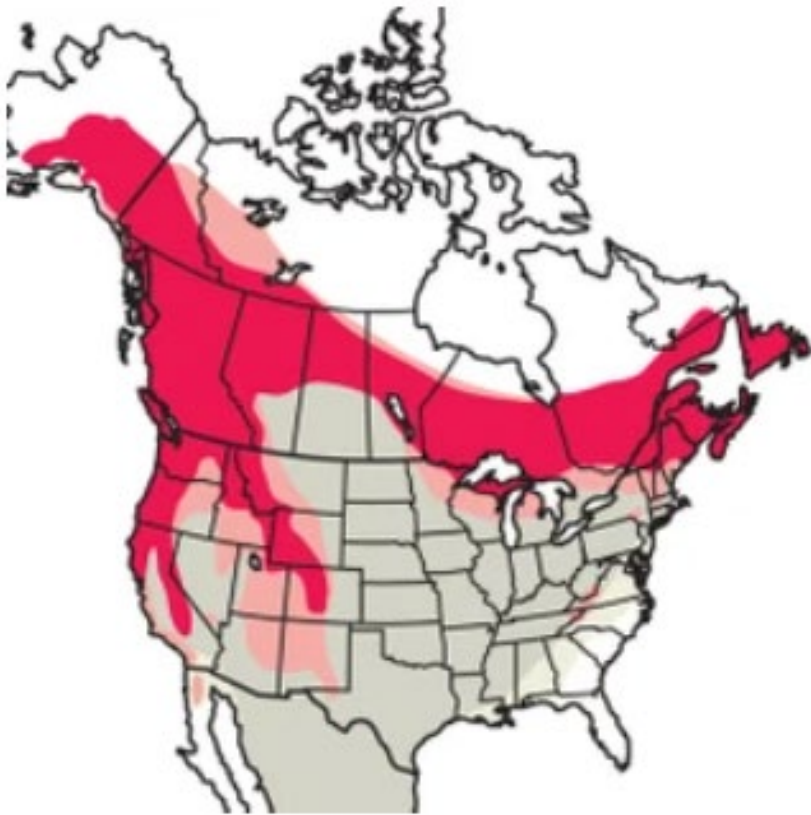
## Olive-sided Flycatcher

## Olive-sided Flycatcher

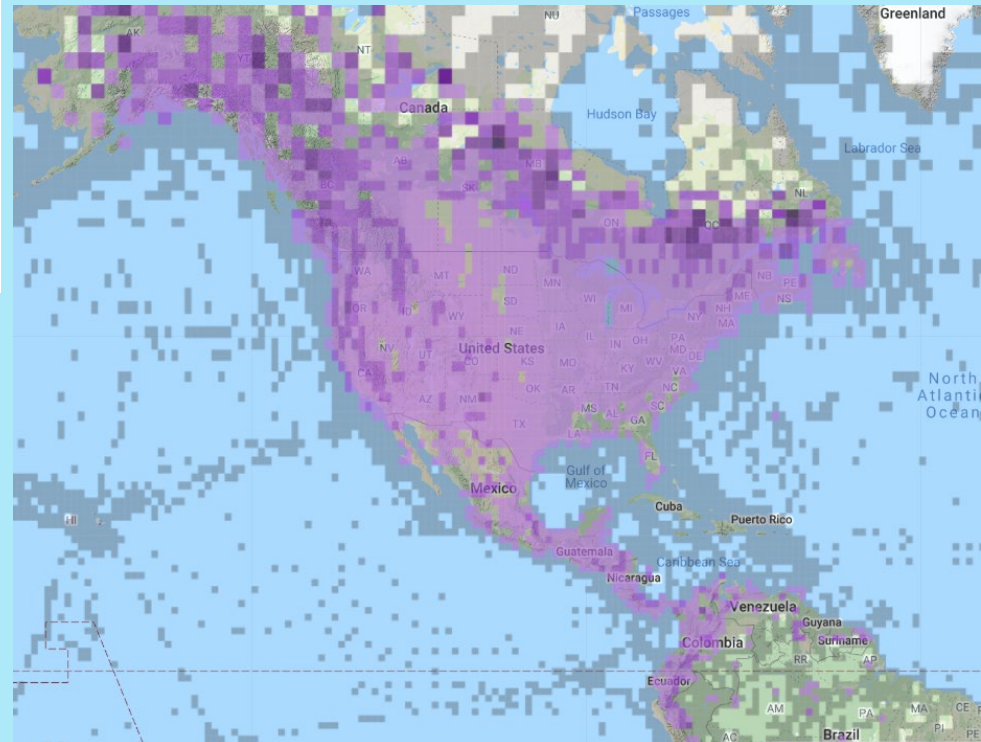


# WHERE/WHEN? RANGE

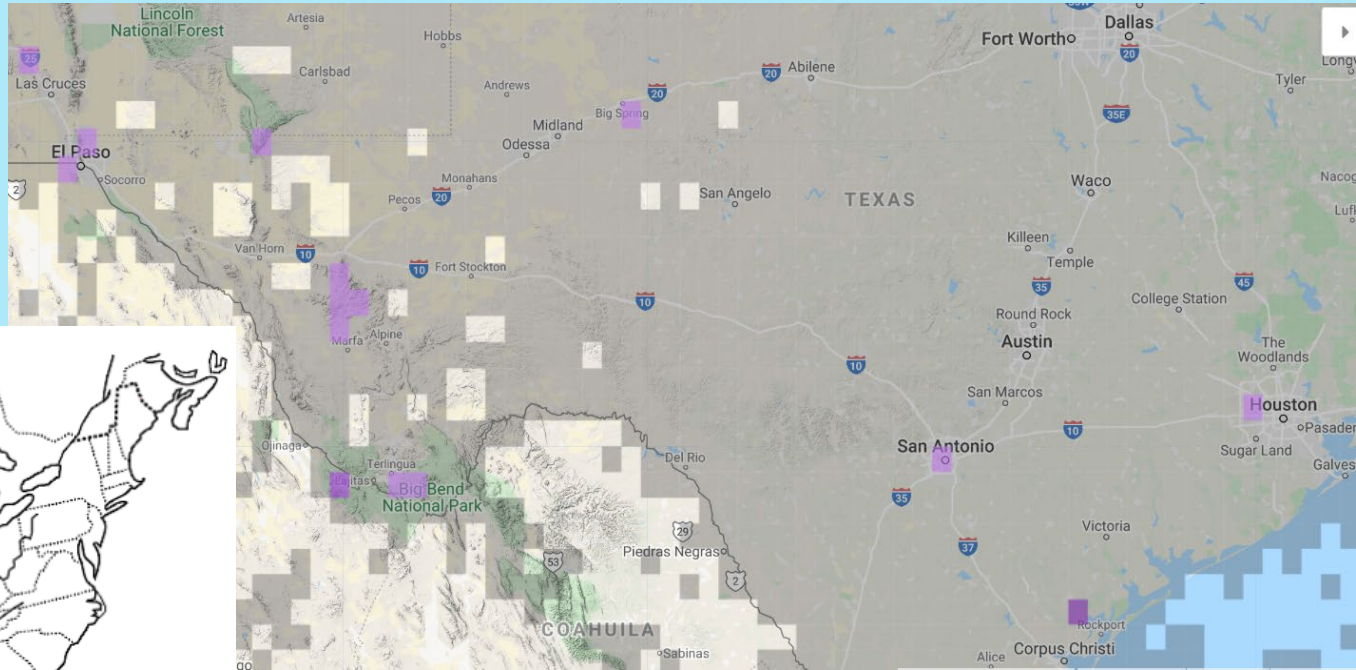
## Olive-sided Flycatcher



## Olive-sided Flycatcher



# WHERE/WHEN? RANGE

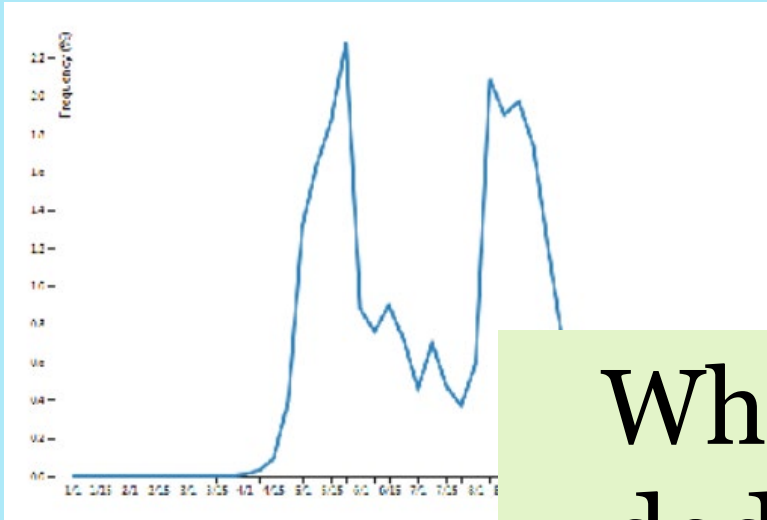


**Greater Pewee**

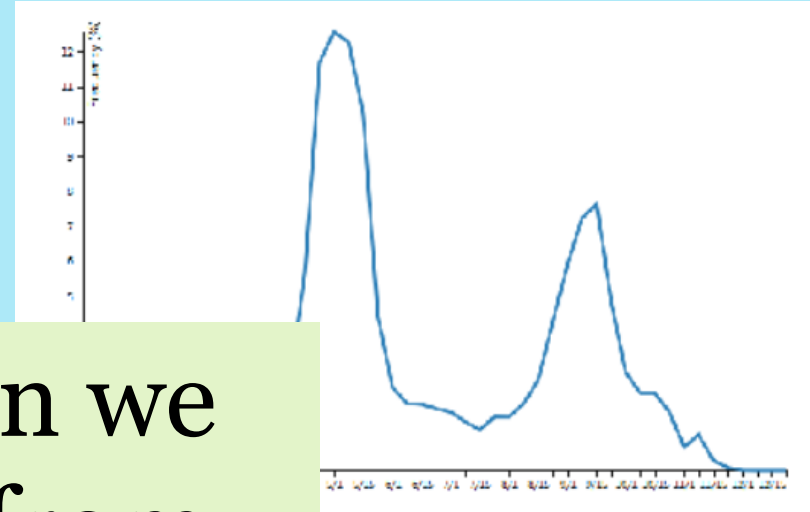


**Greater Pewee**

# WHEN? FREQUENCY IN TEXAS

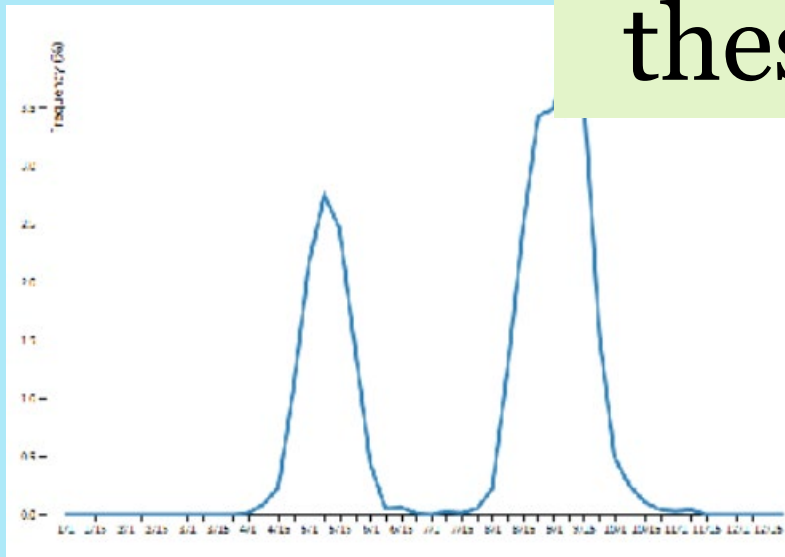


Western Wood-pewee

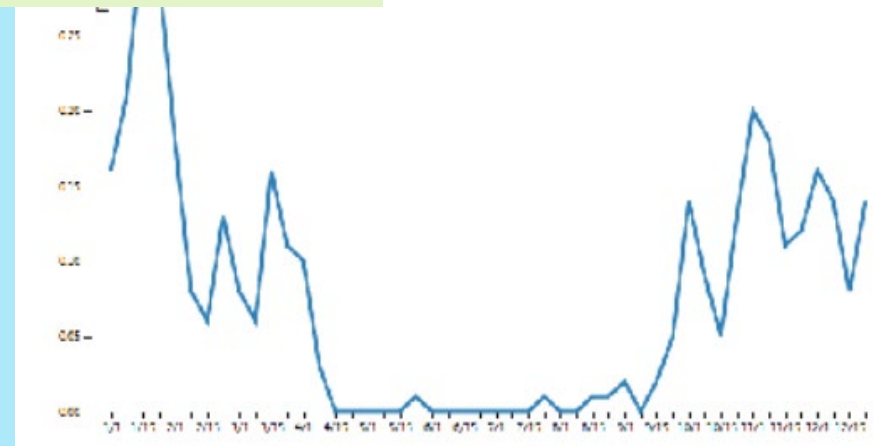


Western Wood-pewee

What can we  
deduce from  
these graphs ?

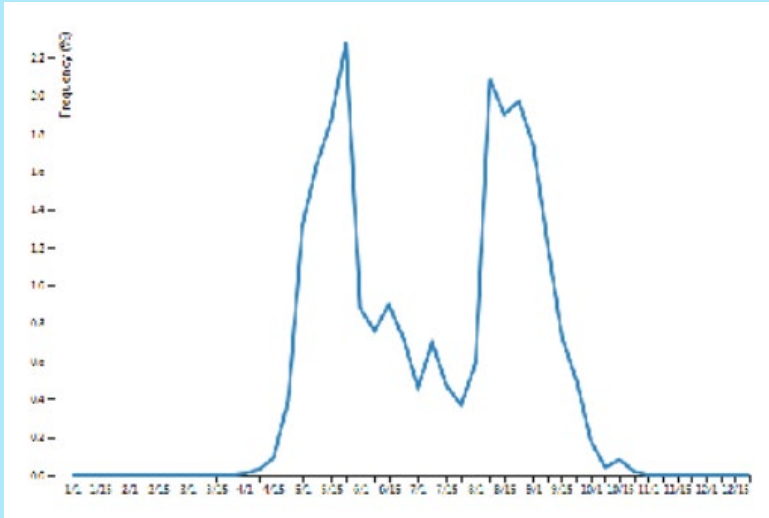


Olive-sided Flycatcher

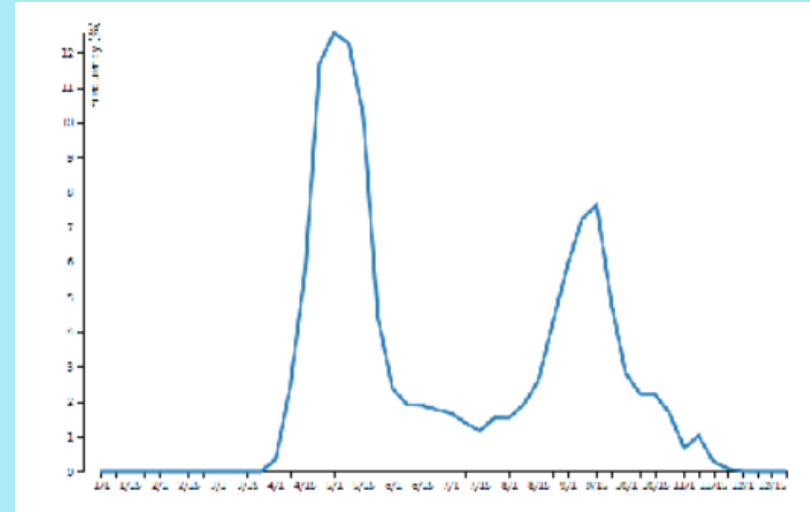


**Greater Pewee**

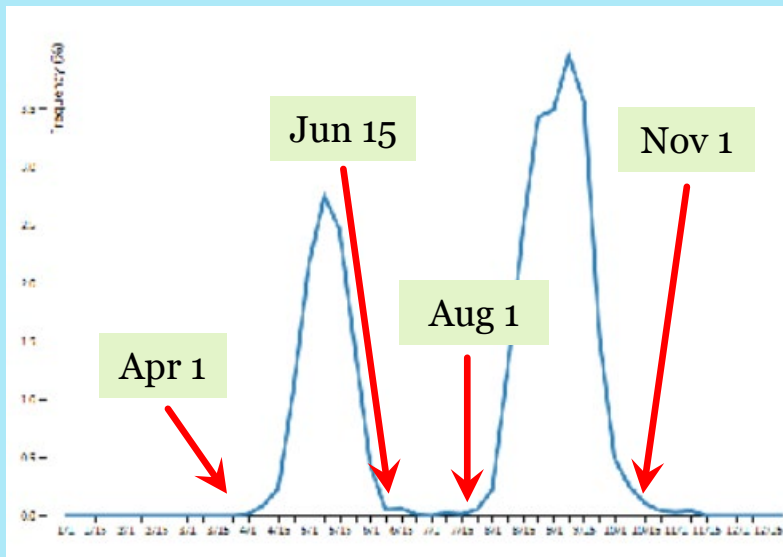
# WHEN? FREQUENCY IN TEXAS



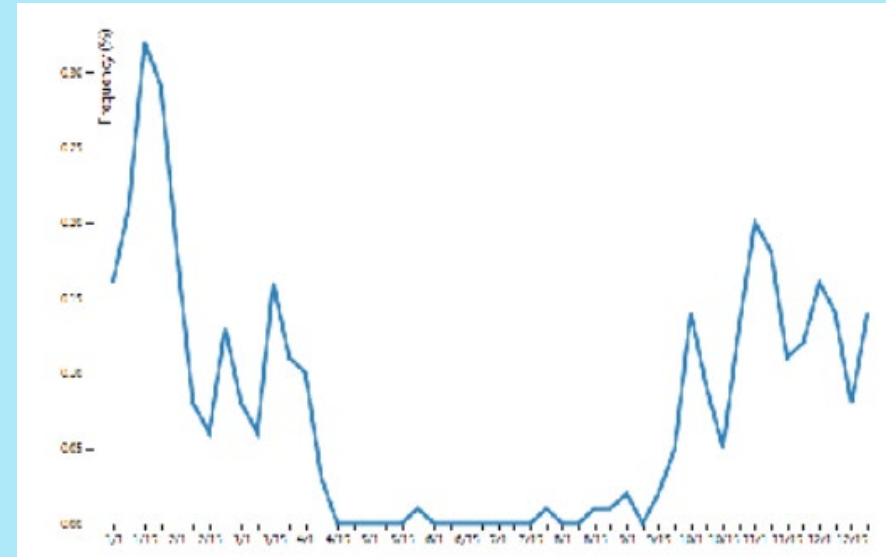
Western Wood-pewee



Eastern Wood-pewee



Olive-sided Flycatcher



**Greater Pewee**

# WHERE?

## HABITAT & MICRO-HABITAT

Open woods or edges of woods. High and conspicuous perches. Favors drier habitats than Eastern.

*The perch-changing pewee.*

Western Wood-pewee

Various woodlands. Prefers edges, forest clearings, and in the forest interior – places with more open canopy.

*Flycatcher on a string.*

Eastern Wood-pewee

Montane and northern coniferous forests. Forest edges or openings. Dead snags & the very tops of trees.

*Portly flycatcher with an open vest.*

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Higher altitude forests. Open mature woods. Very rare in Davis & Chisos mountains.

*Jose Maria!*

Greater Pewee

# WHERE? HABITAT & MICRO-HABITAT



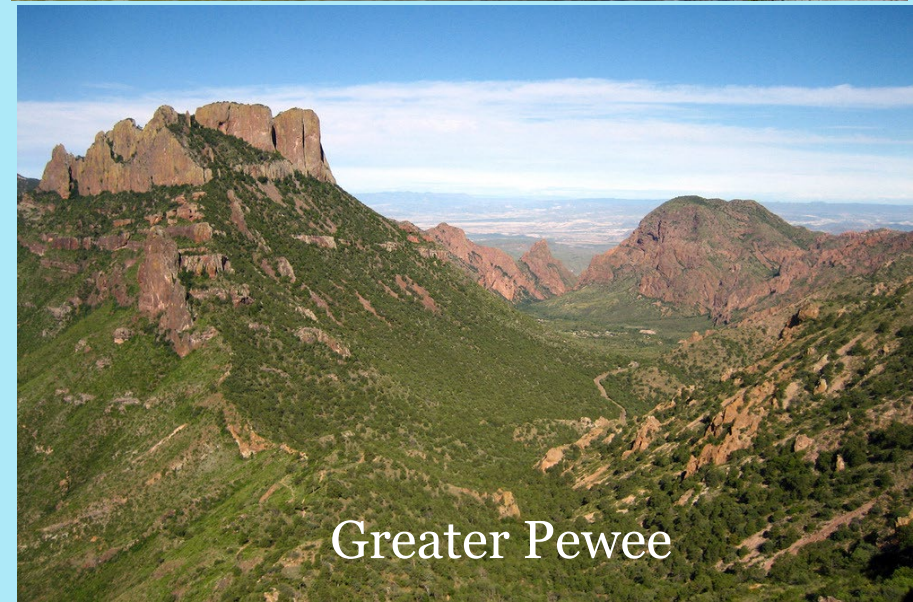
Western Wood-pewee



Eastern Wood-pewee



Olive-sided Flycatcher



Greater Pewee

# OVERVIEW

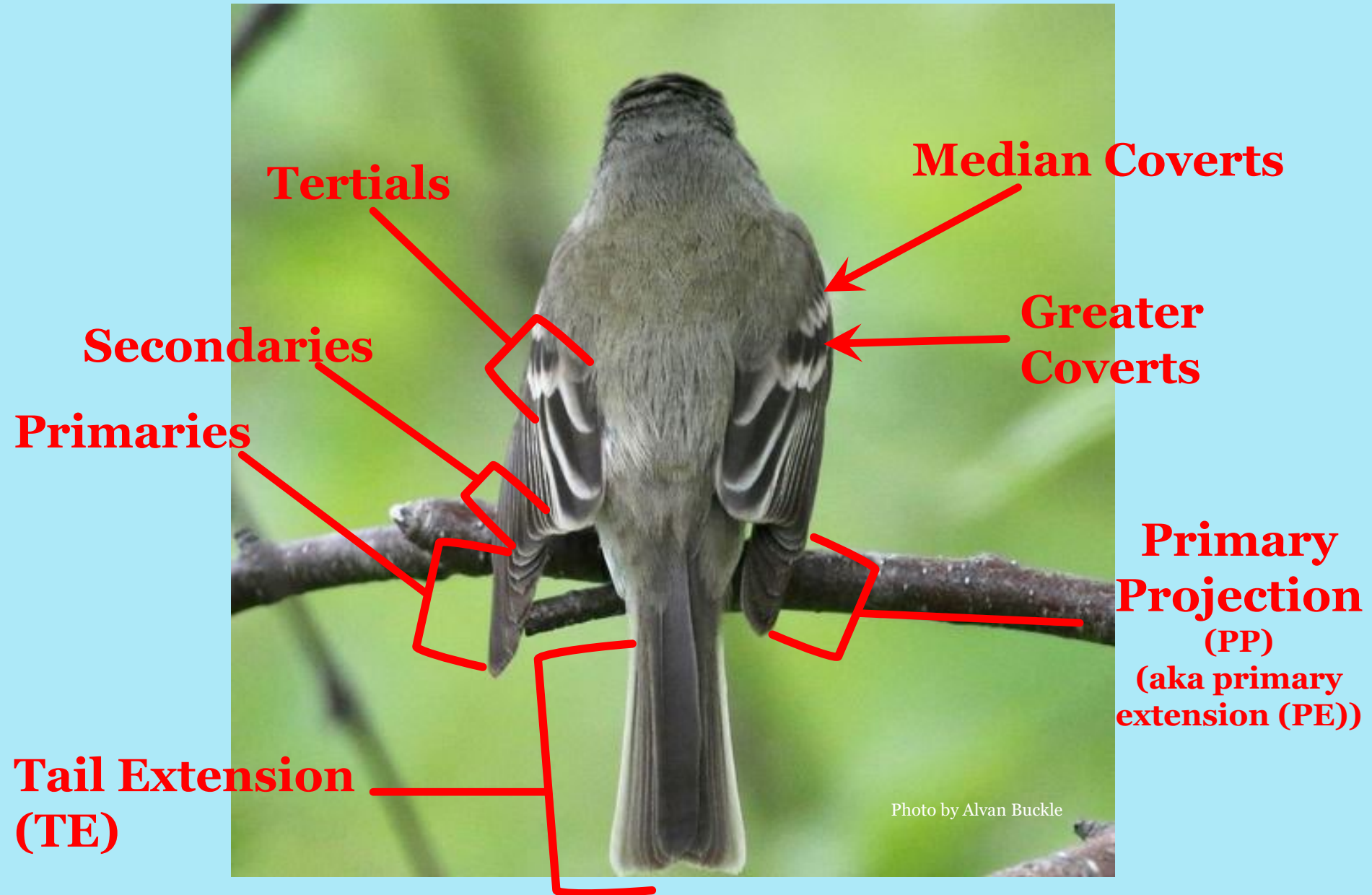
- ▶ Diagnostic
  - ▶ Song “*quick 3 beers*”
- ▶ Strongly supporting
  - ▶ Strong “vested” look
  - ▶ White throat & belly
- ▶ Supporting
  - ▶ Peaked head
  - ▶ Long wings
  - ▶ Top perch (very typical)



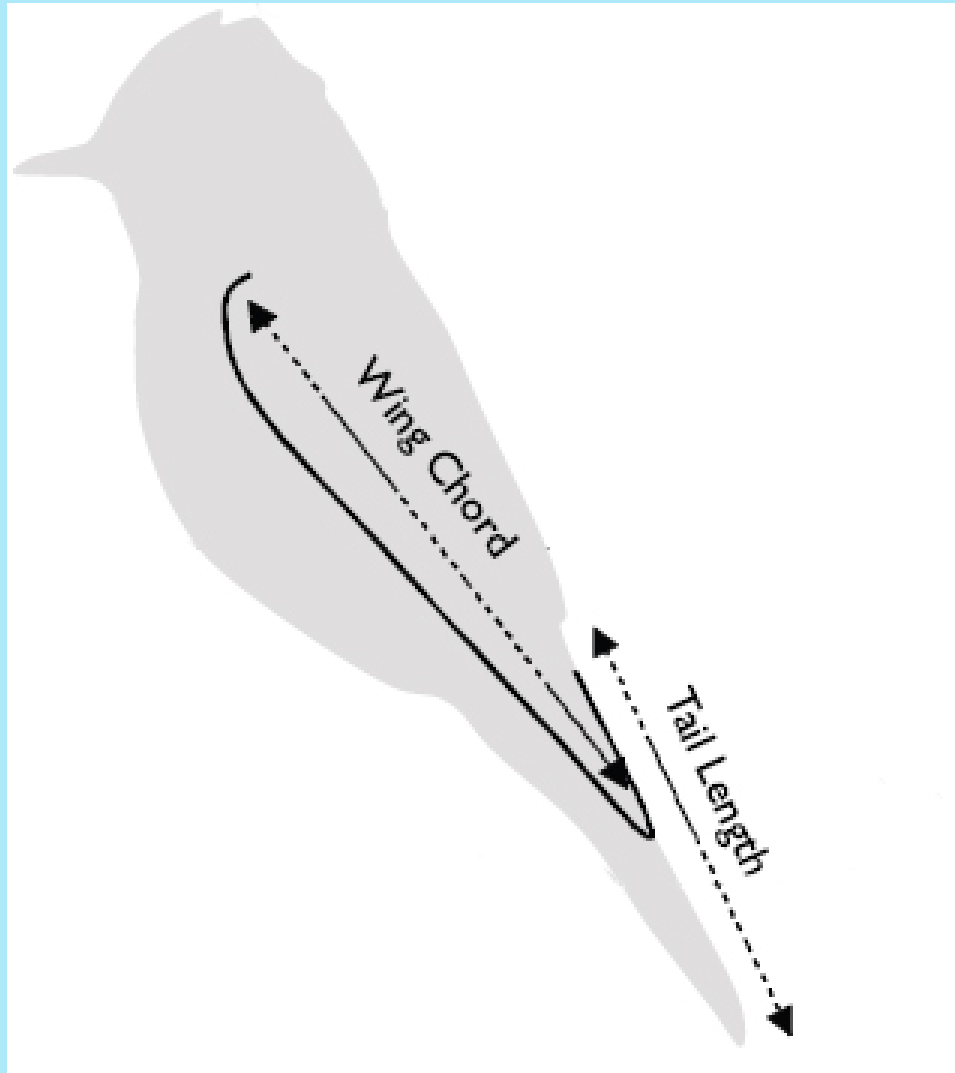
Photo by Luke Seitz

Olive-sided Flycatcher

# FLYCATCHER TOPOGRAPHY



# WING CHORD VS TAIL LENGTH



Eastern has a  
proportionately longer  
tail

# GISS & STRUCTURE (GENUS)

Photo by Rob Bonner

Photo by John Van Dort

Photo by Carlos Echeverria

Photo by Tammy McQuade



Western  
Wood-pewee



Eastern  
Wood-pewee



Olive-sided  
Flycatcher



Greater Pewee

- Long wings
- Long primary projection
- Flycatcher bill
- Attenuated look
- Often crested-look
- Often vested-look

## Olive-sided Flycatcher

Photo by Carlos Echeverria



- Longer wings
- Shorter tail
- Very “vested-look”
- Thicker bill

# GISS & STRUCTURE

Big-uns

## Greater Pewee

Photo by Tammy McQuade



- Longer tail
- Longer, thinner bill
- Rounder wingtips

# BILL & HEAD

Photo by Tammy McQuade



Greater Pewee

Longer bill

Photo by Carlos Echeverria



Olive-sided  
Flycatcher

Thicker bill

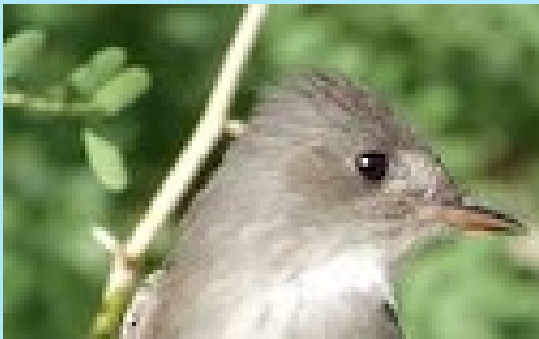
Photo by John Van Dort



Eastern  
Wood-pewee

Often pale  
lower mandible

Photo by Rob Bonner



Western  
Wood-pewee

Usually dark  
lower mandible

# FIELD MARKS

- ▶ Diagnostic
  - ▶ White dorsal marks
- ▶ Strongly supporting
- ▶ Supporting



Photo by Maury Swoveland



Photo by Jean-Claude Charbonneau

Olive-sided  
Flycatcher  
**(juvenile)**

# FIELD MARKS

- ▶ Diagnostic
- ▶ Strongly supporting
- ▶ Supporting
  - ▶ Top perch (very typical)



Photo by Eric Hernandez



Photo by Marco Beaulieu



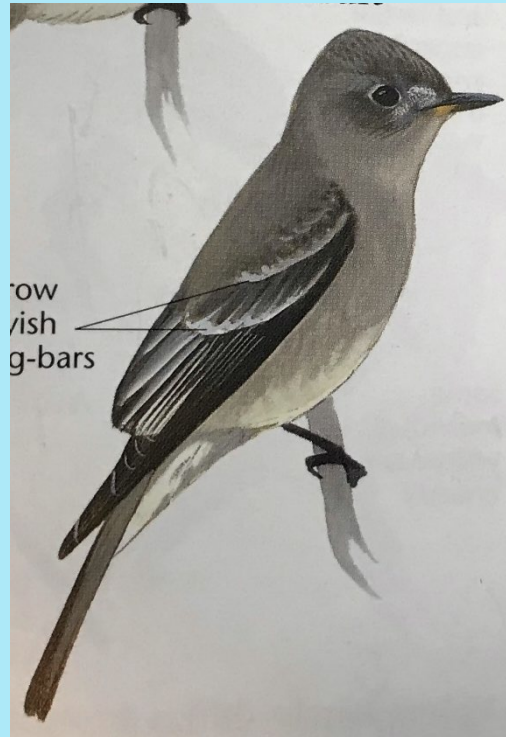
Photo by Adam Dudley

Olive-sided  
Flycatcher

# DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE VS EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE

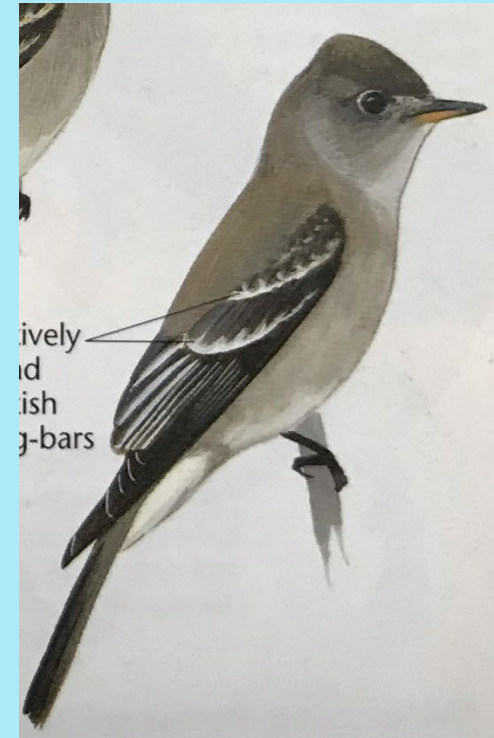
- Traditionally considered “indistinguishable” in the field – except by voice
- **Sibley** “...very similar in all respects...”
- **NG** “...identification very difficult...”
- **Zimmer** “...except by voice, may be impossible...”

Graphic by David A. Sibley



Western  
Wood-pewee

Graphic by David A. Sibley



Eastern  
Wood-pewee

DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS  
WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE  
VS  
EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE

- ***Field Identification of Western & Eastern Wood-pewees;*** Birding Magazine; 2008;
- Cin-ty Lee, Andrew Birch, & Ted Lee Eubanks
- Example of a **great** identification article
  - Well written, succinct
  - Reviews all field marks
  - Identifies hierarchy of field marks
  - Original research based on skins & large sample of pix
  - Summation using explanatory graphs
  - Two apparently reliable new field marks
  - Semi-quantifies GISS
  - Based on structure
  - Emphasizes a diagnosis

DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS  
WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE  
VS  
EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE

Reliability



1. Voice/song (most reliable)
2. Contrast between upper and lower wing bars\*  
(hinted at by Sibley)
3. Ratio of primary extension to tail extension (PE/TE)
4. GISS (posture, tail angle) \*
5. Lower mandible coloration
6. Overall coloration of underparts and upperparts

► \*New field marks

# DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE VS EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE

Contrast between  
upper & lower  
wingbars

Brighter  
wingbars

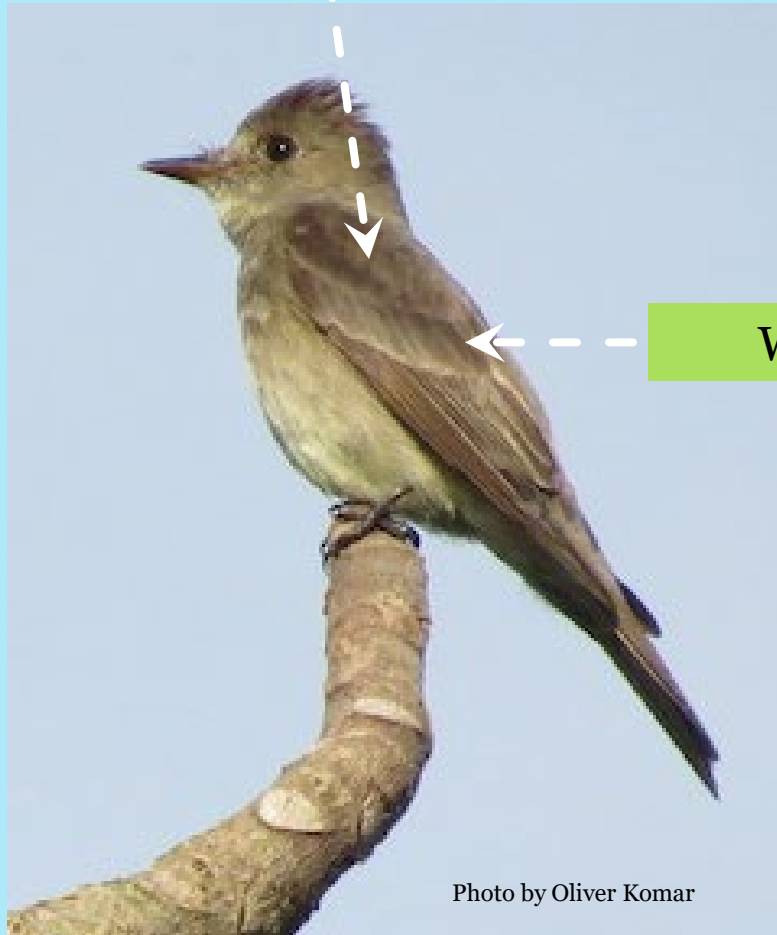


Photo by Oliver Komar

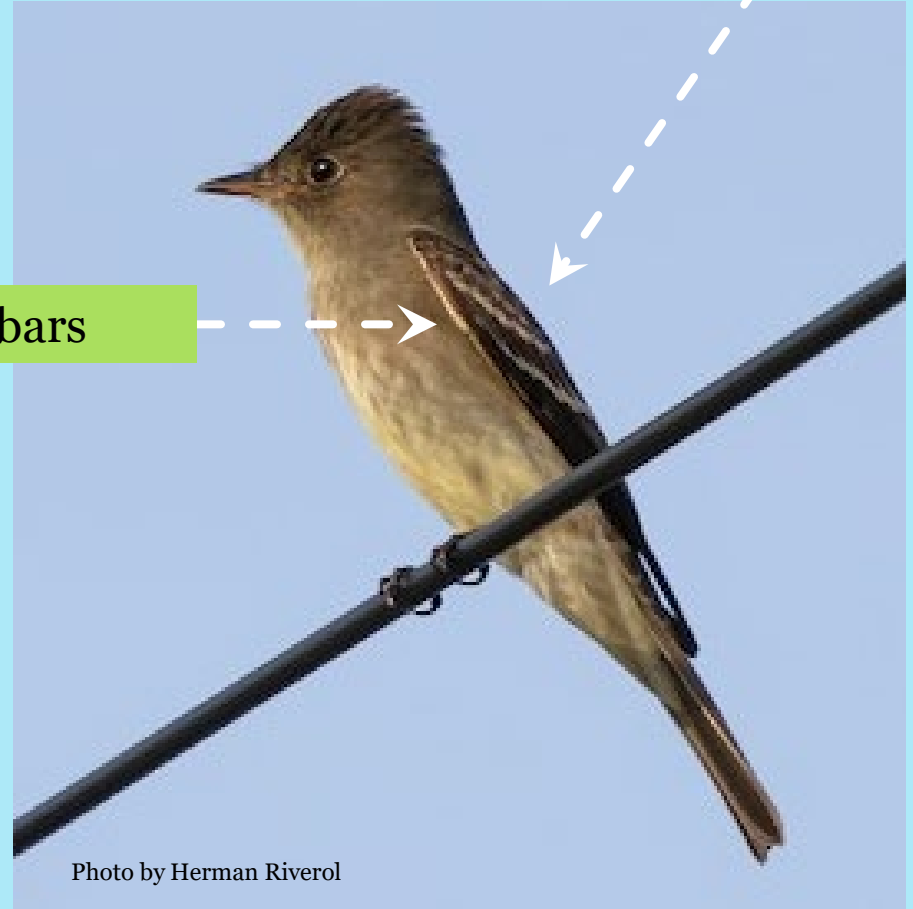


Photo by Herman Riverol

Western Wood-pewee

Eastern Wood-pewee

DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS  
WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE  
VS  
EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE



Photo by Oliver Komar

Western Wood-pewee



Photo by Herman Riverol

Eastern Wood-pewee

Lower  
Mandible  
Color



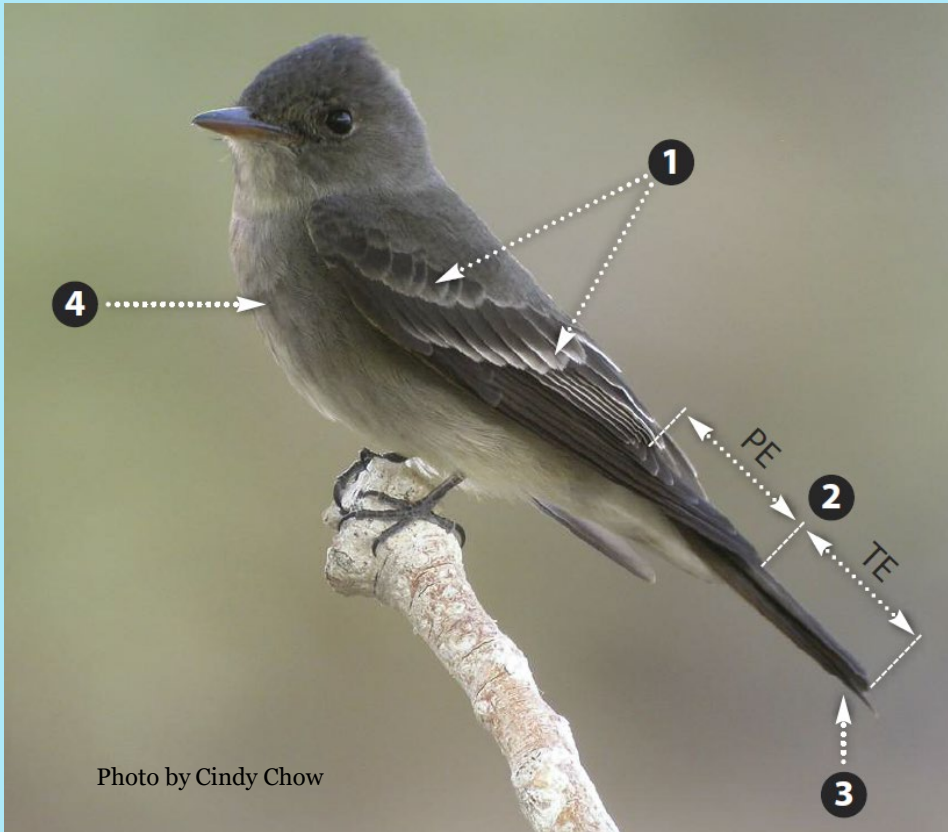
Photo by Andrew Thomas



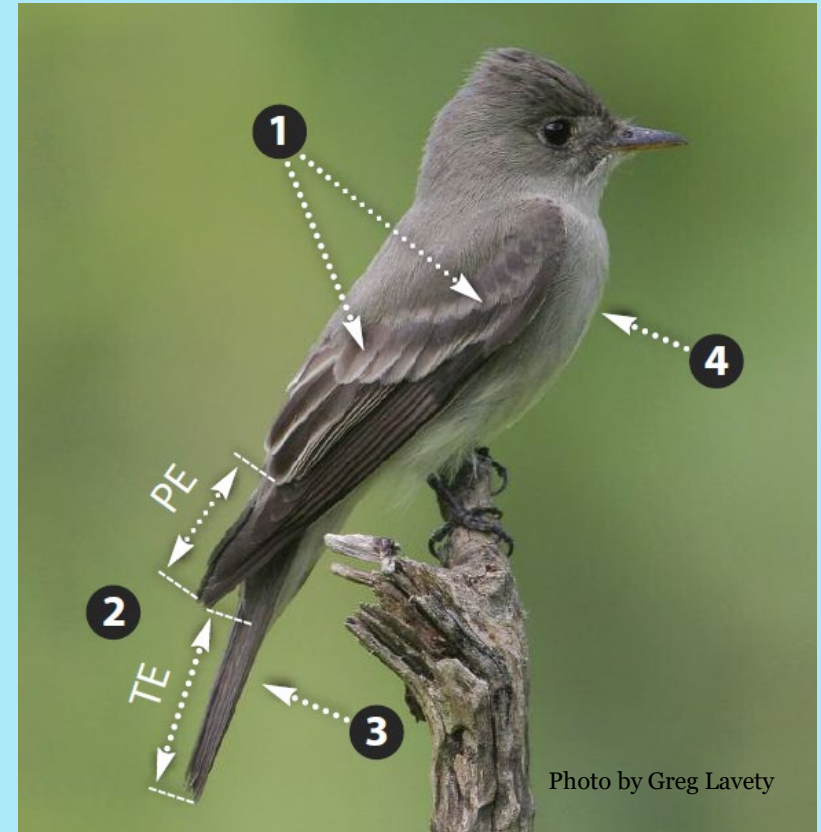
Photo by Matt Mason

# Diagnostic Field Marks

## Western Wood-pewee vs Eastern Wood-pewee



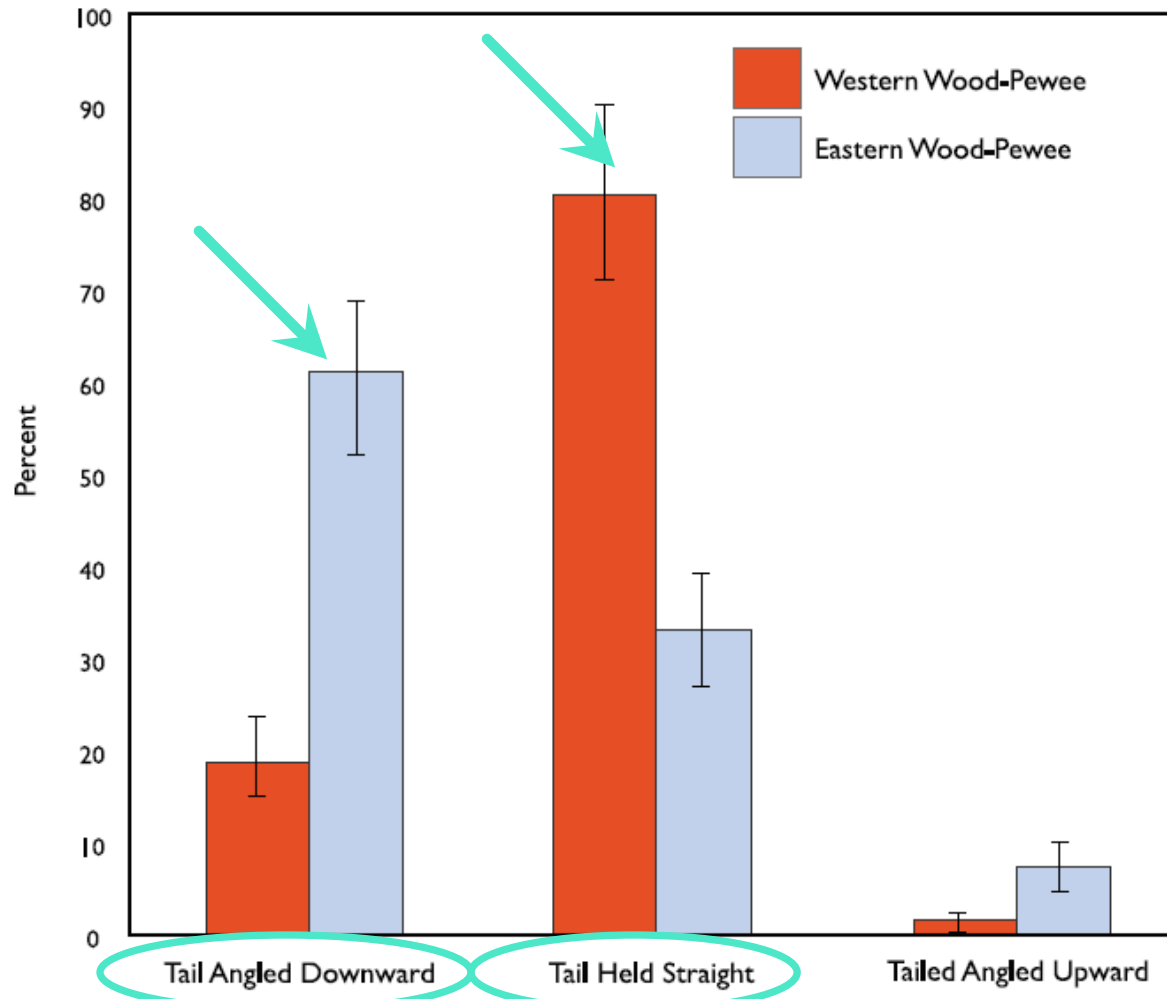
- Low-contrast upper wing bar
- $PE = TE$
- Tail held in line
- Darker underparts.



- High-contrast upper wing bar
- $TE > PE$
- Tail cocked
- Lighter underparts

*Field Identification of Western & Eastern Wood-pewees*; Birding Magazine; 2008;

# REVIEW OF PHOTOS



**Fig. 5.** Percentage of photographs (horizontal axis) of Eastern and Western Wood-Pewees that fall into the three categories of tail posture: angled downward, held straight, and angled upward. Eastern tends to hold its tail downward more often than Western, which prefers to hold its tail straight in line with the back. *Data analyzed by Cin-Ty Lee; figure by Kei Sochi.*

# DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS

## SILHOUETTES (GISS & STRUCTURE)

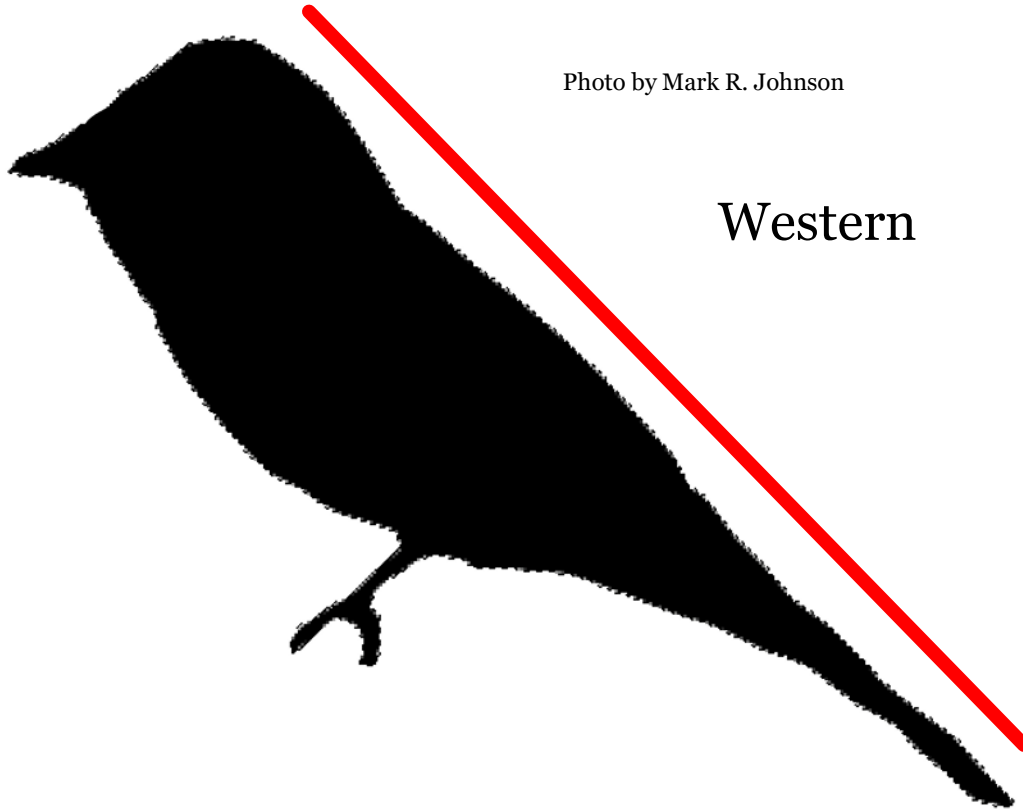


Photo by Mark R. Johnson

Western

80% of time holds tail straight

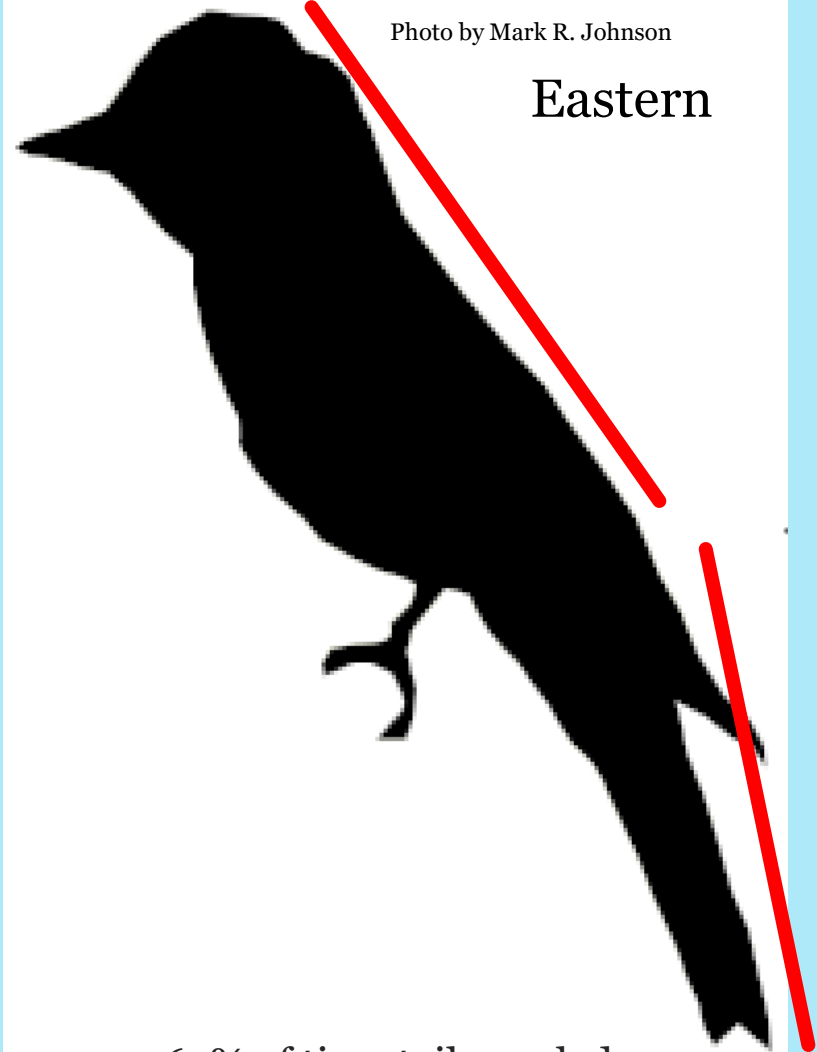


Photo by Mark R. Johnson

Eastern

67% of time tails angled

# DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS WINGBARS & COLOR OF UNDERPARTS



Photo by Oliver Komar

Western Wood-pewee



Photo by Herman Riverol

Eastern Wood-pewee

# DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS WING BARS & COLOR OF UNDERPARTS

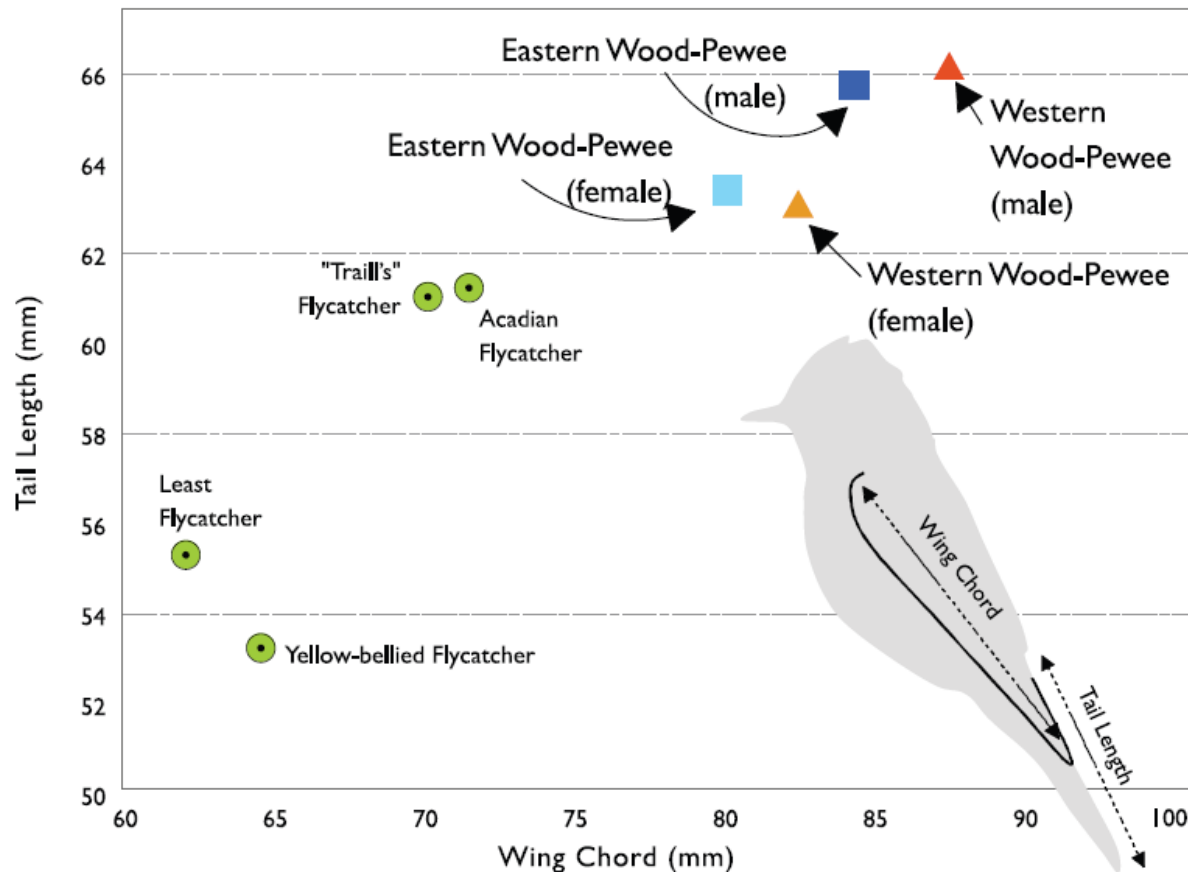


Western Wood-pewee



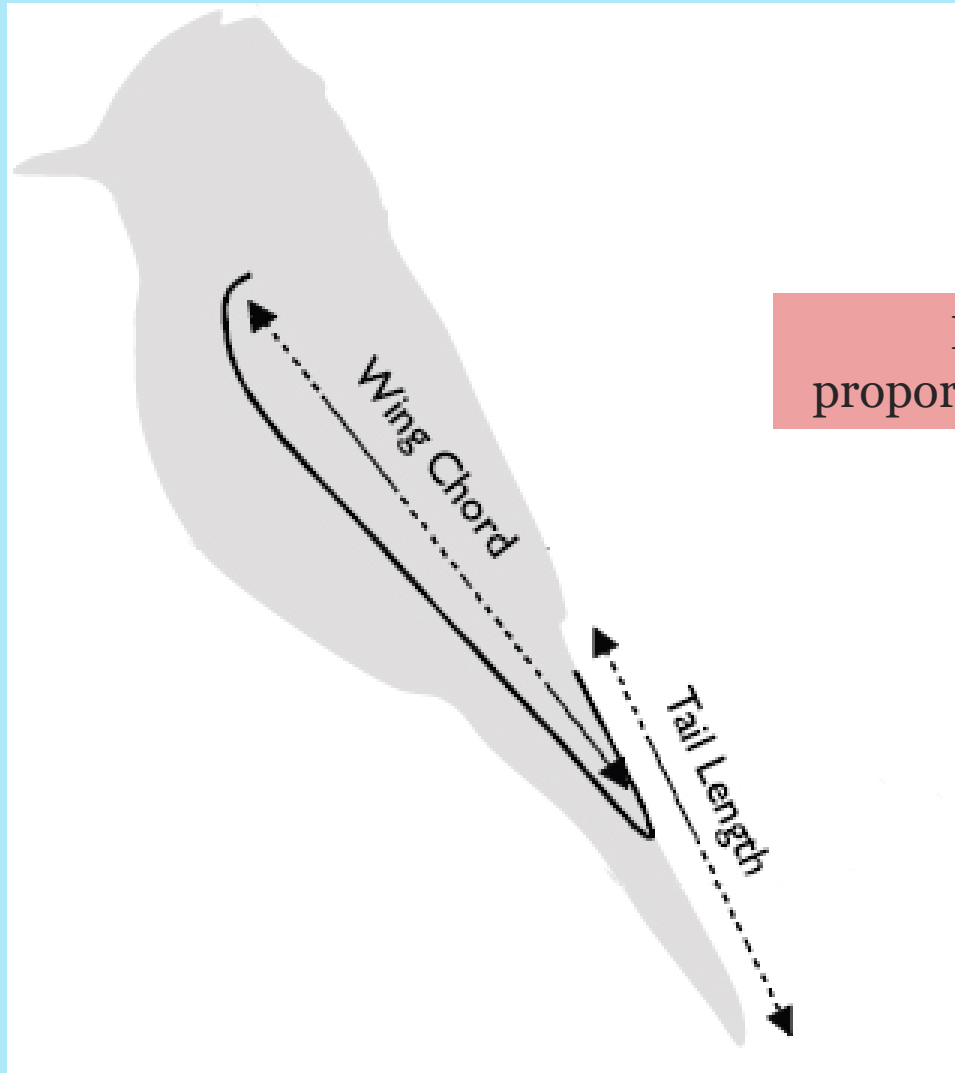
Eastern Wood-pewee

# WING CHORD VS TAIL LENGTH



**Fig. 3.** Tail length vs. wing chord length (in millimeters) using data from Rising and Schueler (1980) for wood-pewees and Pyle (1997a, 1997b) for Least, Acadian, Yellow-bellied, and "Traill's" (Alder and Willow) Flycatchers. *Data analyzed by Cin-Ty Lee; figure by Kei Sochi.*

# WING CHORD VS TAIL LENGTH



Eastern has a  
proportionately longer tail

# WOOD-PEWEE

## SUMMARY

### Western

- Straighter back & tail
- Darker coloration
- More extensive vest
- Duller upper & bright lower wing bar
- Generally dusky lower mandible.

### Eastern

- Tends to hold tail cocked slightly downward
- Lighter overall coloration
- Wing bars equally bright
- Pale lower mandible
- Very slightly proportionately longer tail.