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EMPIDONAX THE “GNAT MASTER”

5 EASTERN EMPIDS PART 3: PLUMAGE

“YOU WANT SOME MORE?”

THE FIFTH ELEMENT, ROBOT BARTENDER, LUC BESSON



LGBs (LITTLE GRAY BIRDS) PLUMAGE OVERVIEW

- ▶ Plumage
 - ▶ Subtle
 - ▶ Changes over time
 - ▶ Subject to lighting conditions
 - ▶ Grows dull from wear (late summer)
 - ▶ A few have fresh plumage in late summer (Acadian, Hammonds)
- ▶ All Empids are:
 - ▶ Overall – drab
 - ▶ Wing Panels – darker wings with (at least) pale wing bars
 - ▶ Eye Ring – eye ring contrasts with darker face
 - ▶ Breast Band – variable contrast
 - ▶ Upper Parts – varying tones of olive, brown, or gray
 - ▶ Lower Parts – yellowish, grayish, to whitish

TRY, TRY, TRY TO
RESIST.....

.....making ID based on subtle coloration
differences shown in field guides!!!!

EASTERN EMPIDS BY DAVID A. SIBLEY

All Illustrations by David A. Sibley, From *Sibley Birds* app

Least



Yellow-bellied



Acadian



Overall – drab

Wing Panels – darker wings with (at least) pale wing bars

Eye Ring – eye ring contrasts with darker face

Breast Band – variable contrast

Upper Parts – varying tones of olive, brown, or gray

Lower Parts – yellowish, grayish, to whitish

Willow



Alder



EASTERN EMPIDS BY HILARY BURN

All Illustrations by Hilary Burn, from *Birds of the World* website

Least



Yellow-bellied



Acadian



Overall – drab

Wing Panels – darker wings with (at least) pale wing bars

Eye Ring – eye ring contrasts with darker face

Breast Band – variable contrast

Upper Parts – varying tones of olive, brown, or gray

Lower Parts – yellowish, grayish, to whitish

Willow



Alder



EYE RING

EYE-RING

- a) Intensity
 - i. Absent
 - ii. Faint
 - iii. Narrow
 - iv. Complete
 - v. Bold
- b) Shape
 - a) typically not quite even all the way around
 - i. Slightly thinner across top
 - ii. Slightly thinner in back
 - iii. “Kick” in back
 - iv. Broken
 - v. Messy
- c) Contrast eye-ring vs face

EYE-RING – LEAST



Photo by David Turgeon



Photo by Kevin Metcalf

Photo by Matthew Addicks

Bold, complete, but messy eye-ring. Of uniform width. Often shows a white "kick" or "teardrop" in rear.



EYE-RING – YELLOW-BELLIED



Photo by Sue Barth



Photo by Brian Tychie

Complete, conspicuous and somewhat yellow-ish, but not as crisply defined as **Least**. Nearly uniform width (slightly thicker posteriorally).



Photo by Jeremiah Tremble

EYE-RING – ACADIAN



Photo by Joe Wing



Photo by Edward Plumer

Photo by Brenton Reyner

Narrow, pale yellow. The eye is distinctly large and prominent. Eye-ring can be faint on some individuals.



EYE-RING – ALDER/WILLOW



Photo by Brian Sullivan



Photo by Ad Konings

Photo by Bryan Calk



Varies from conspicuous but narrow, to virtually absent. No “kick” or “tear” at the rear.

EYE-RING COMPARISON

INCREASING VIBRANCY

Willow/Alder

Conspicuous but narrow, to absent.



Photo by Brenden Klick



Photo by Brian Sullivan

Acadian

Narrow, pale yellow.



Photo by Joe Wing

Yellow-bellied

Complete, yellow-ish, uniform, not as crisp.



Photo by Sue Barth

Least

Bold, complete, but messy



Photo by David Turgeon



Photo by Eric Michael



Photo by Glenn Hodgkins



Photo by Brenton Reyner



Photo by Debbie Parker



Photo by Luke Seitz



Photo by Edward Plumer



Photo by Brian Tychie



Photo by Kevin Metcalf



Photo by Ad Konings



Photo by Brian Sullivan



Photo by Oscar Wilhelmy



Photo by Johanne Charette



Photo by Matthew Addicks

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING

(ONE SPECIES PER PAGE)

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 1



Photo by Brenden Klick



Photo by Eric Michael



Photo by Debbie Parker



Photo by Brian Tinker



Photo by Joe Wing



Photo by Michael J Good

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 2



Photo by John Cormorant



Photo by Liron Gertsman



Photo by Alan Troyer



Photo by Johanne Charette



Photo by Yves Darveau



Photo by Jacob Collison

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 3



Photo by Kris Peterson



Photo by Mark Greene



Photo by Will Sweet



Photo by Liliana Chavarria Duriaux



Photo by Luke Seitz



Photo by Oscar Wilhelmy

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 4



Photo by Dick Dionne



Photo by Brian Sullivan



Photo by Tim Antanaitis



Photo by Isaias Morataya



Photo by Sue Barth



Photo by Steven Kelling

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 5



Photo by Mark R Johnson



Photo by Benjamen Hack



Photo by Brendon Klick



Photo by Kevin Metcalf



Photo by Rufos Wareham



Photo by Daniel Irons

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 1 – “TRAILS” (WILLOW)



Photo by Brenden Klick



Photo by Eric Michael



Photo by Debbie Parker



Photo by Brian Tinker



Photo by Joe Wing



Photo by Michael J Good

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 2 – YELLOW-BELLIED



Photo by John Cormorant



Photo by Liron Gertsman



Photo by Alan Troyer



Photo by Johanne Charette



Photo by Yves Darveau



Photo by Jacob Collison

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 3 –ACADIAN



Photo by Kris Peterson



Photo by Mark Greene



Photo by Will Sweet



Photo by Liliana Chavarria Duriaux



Photo by Luke Seitz



Photo by Oscar Wilhelm

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 4 – “TRAILS” (ALDER)



Photo by Dick Dionne



Photo by Brian Sullivan



Photo by Tim Antanaitis



Photo by Isaias Morataya



Photo by Sue Barth



Photo by Steven Kelling

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – SPECIES 5 – LEAST



Photo by Mark R Johnson



Photo by Benjamen Hack



Photo by Brendon Klick



Photo by Kevin Metcalf



Photo by Rufos Wareham



Photo by Daniel Irons

EXERCISE 5: EYE RING – ANSWERS

1. Willow
2. Yellow-bellied
3. Acadian
4. Alder
5. Least

MOLT

CONDITION OF PLUMAGE



DETERMINE CONDITION OF PLUMAGE

- Molting
- Fresh
- Slightly worn
- Worn

MOLT

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Patchy wing-bars
- Rough, uneven eye-ring
- Uneven tail
- Primary projection uneven
(unreliable too)

WHAT DO “FRESH” & “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Least (April)



Photo by Shirley Pulgar-Hughs

Photo by Suzanne Labbe

Least (August)



WHAT DO “FRESH” & “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Least (April)



Photo by James Bozeman

Least (August)



Photo by David M. Bell

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Least (April)



Photo by Logan Smith

Least (August)



Photo by Bonne Heinecke

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Least (May)



Photo by Daniel Jauvin

Least (August)



Photo by Jim Merrit

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Yellow-bellied (May)



Photo by Luke Seitz

Yellow-bellied (August)



Photo by Dennis Dirigal

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Yellow-bellied (May)



Photo by Steve Tucker

Yellow-bellied (August)



Photo by Michelle Terrell

Pines2Prairie Photography

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Acadian (May)



Acadian (July)



Photo by Van Remson

Photo by Michael Oliver

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

Acadian (July)

Acadian (May)



Photo by Jordan Roderick



Photo by Darlene Friedman

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

“Trails” (May)



Photo by Owen Strickland

“Trails” (August)



Photo by Warren Cronen

“Trails” (May)



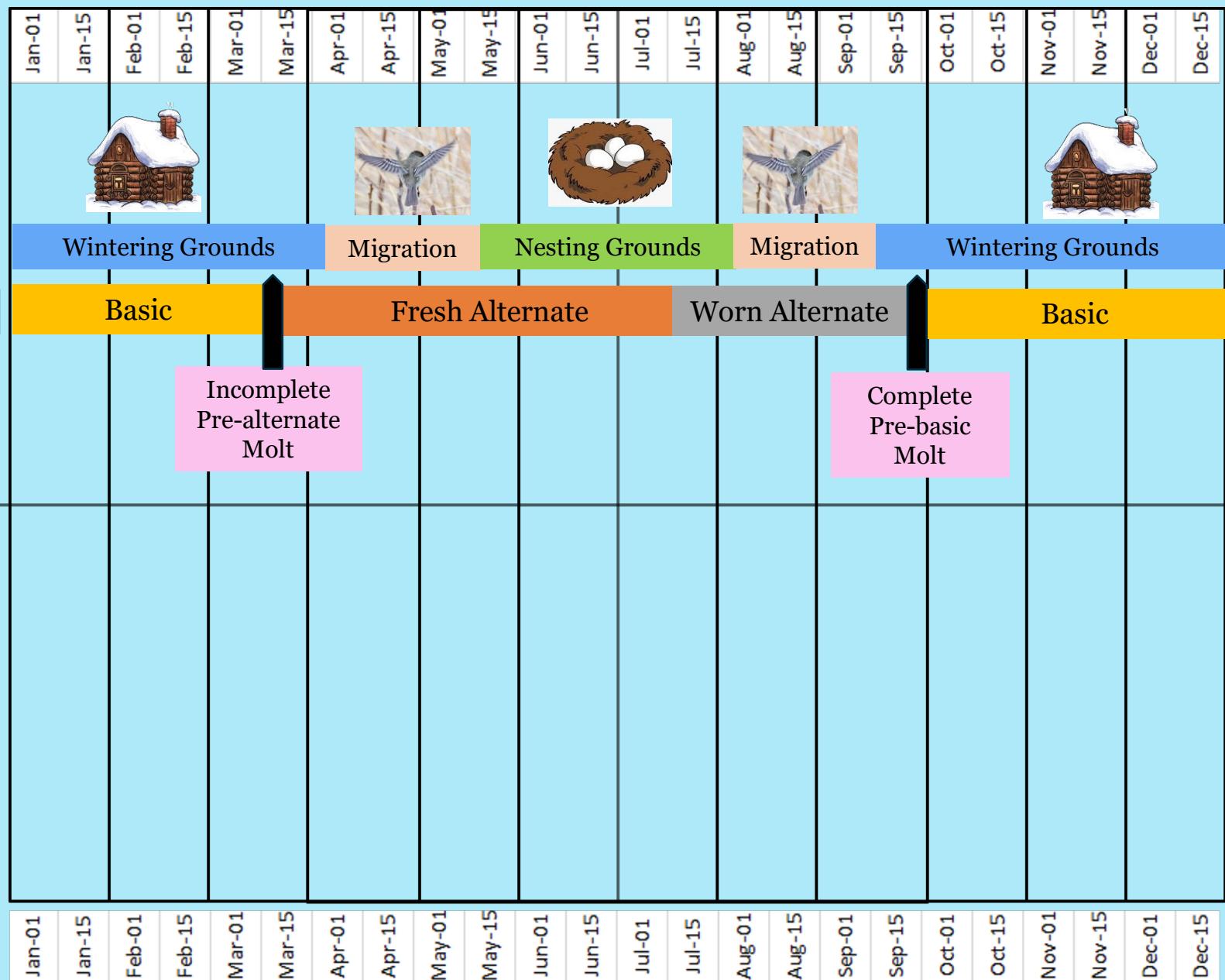
Photo by Michael J. Good

WHAT DO “FRESH” AND “WORN” LOOK LIKE?

“Trails” (August)

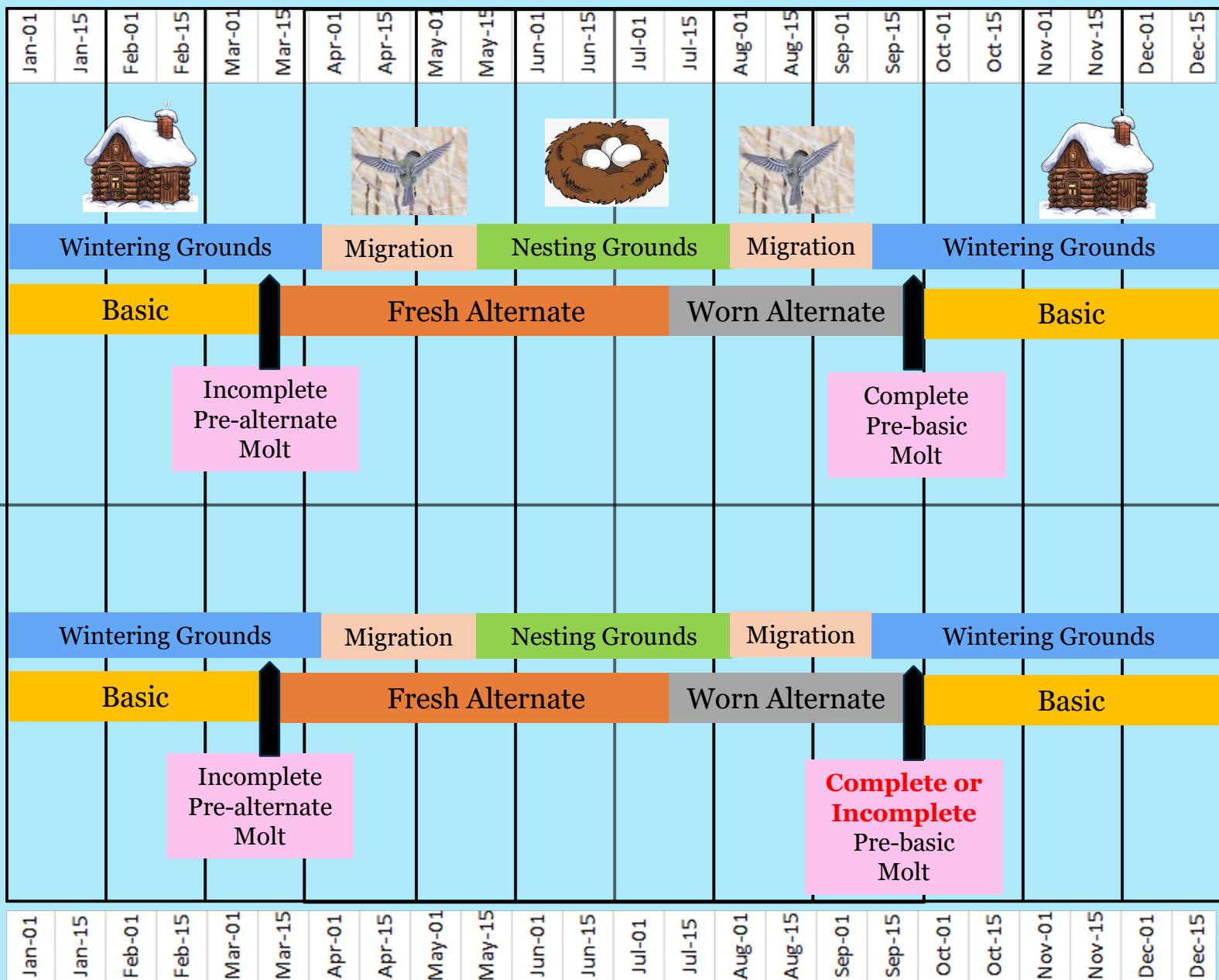


Photo by Ethan Denton



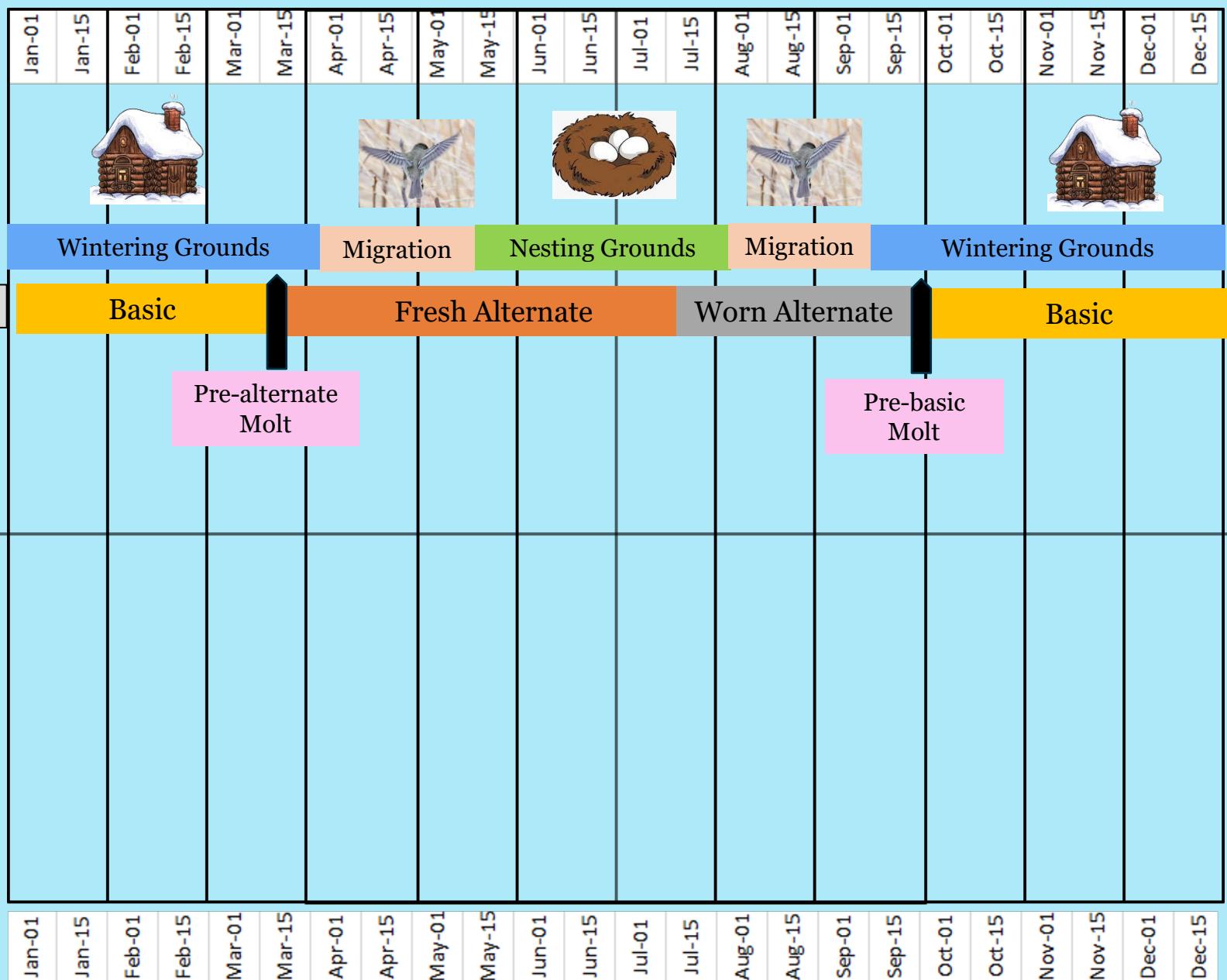
Eastern Empid Molt Strategy

Data Source: **Cornell: Birds of North America** (online)



Eastern Empid Molt Strategy

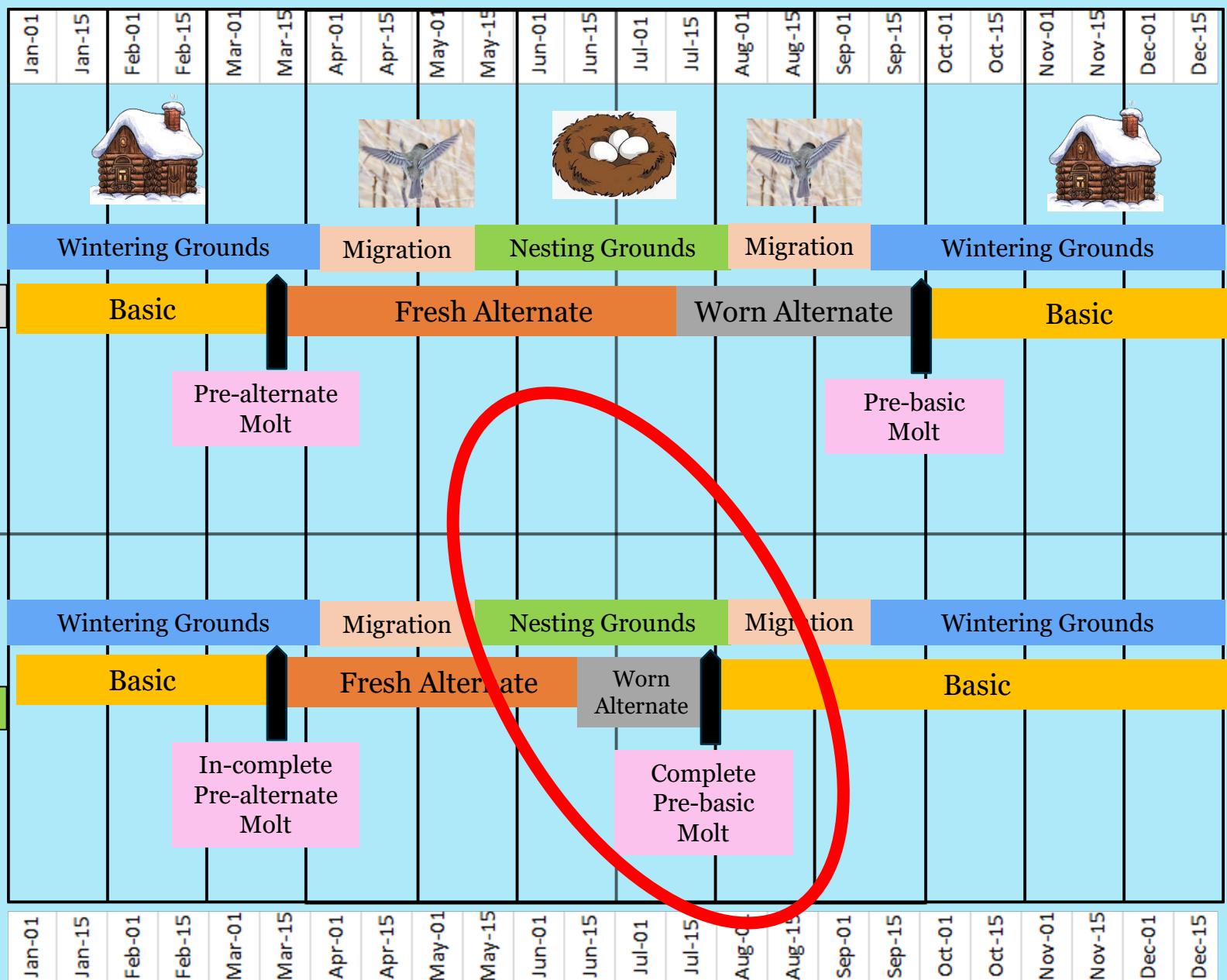
Data Source: **Cornell: Birds of North America** (online)



Data Source: *Field Guide to Advanced Birding*, Kaufman, Kenn.

Eastern Empid Molt Strategy

Data Source: *Cornell: Birds of North America* (online)



Data Source: *Field Guide to Advanced Birding*, Kaufman, Kenn.

Eastern Empid Molt Strategy

Data Source: *Cornell: Birds of North America* (online)

THROAT COLOR & CONTRAST WITH FACE

EASTERN EMPIDS BY DAVID A. SIBLEY

Least



Yellow-bellied



Acadian



Willow



Alder



All Illustrations
by David A. Sibley
From *Sibley Birds*
app

THROAT & FACE CONTRAST – LEAST



Photo by David Turgeon

Throat is whitish or off white (not bright white), contrasting with the darker face and gray-brown wash across breast.



Photo by Juan Miiguel Artigas Azas



Photo by Matthew Addicks

THROAT & FACE CONTRAST – YELLOW-BELLIED



Photo by Luke Seitz



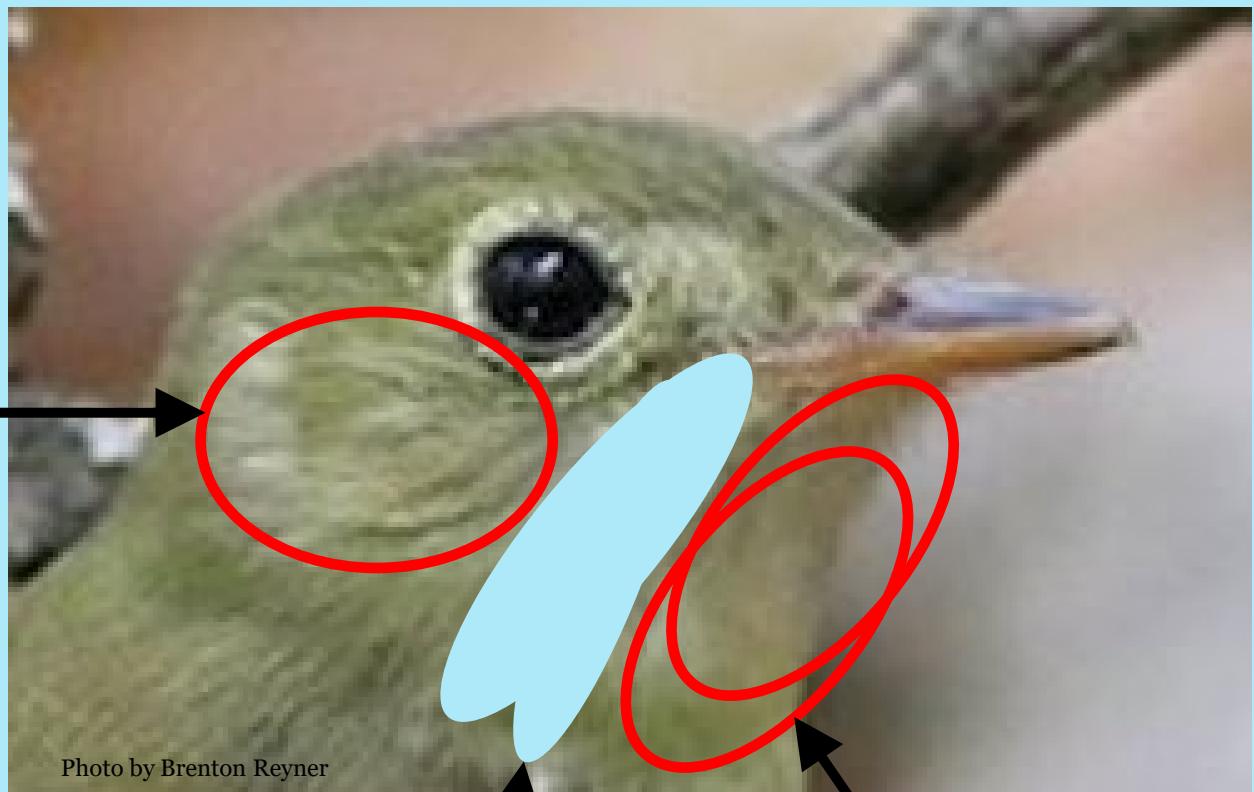
Photo by Brian Tychie

Low contrast yellow
throat. Olive malar blends
to yellow-olive throat.



Photo by Jon Cormorant

THROAT & FACE CONTRAST – ACADIAN



Malar

Chin & throat

THROAT & FACE CONTRAST – ACADIAN



Photo by Joe Wing

Even though the throat is white or grayish **it does not contrast sharply** with the face because of this **pale green malar area**, which is one of the most obvious visual marks of the species.



Photo by Edward Plumer

THROAT & FACE CONTRAST – ALDER/WILLOW



The most consistent plumage character of “Trails” is the white throat, contrasting noticeably with the face and usually contrasting somewhat with a faint breast band. More contrasting white throat than Acadian.



THROAT & FACE CONTRAST COMPARISON

INCREASING THROAT/FACE CONTRAST



Yellow-bellied

Low contrast yellow throat. Olive malar blends to yellow-olive throat



Kennan Yakola

Acadian

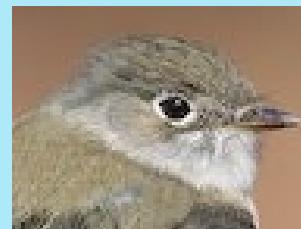
does not contrast sharply with the face because of pale green malar area



Joe Wing

Least

whitish or off white, contrasts with darker face & breast band



David Turgeon

Willow/Alder

white throat, contrasts noticeably with the face & somewhat with faint breast band



Brenden Klick



Isaac Denzer

Brian Tychie



Jeremiah Tremble



Tim Arthur



Brenton Reyner



Edward Plumer



Oscar Wilhelmy



Kevin Metcalf



Matthew Addicks



Eric Michael



Debbie Parker



Ad Konings



Lars Peterson



Glenn Hodgkins



Steve Kelling

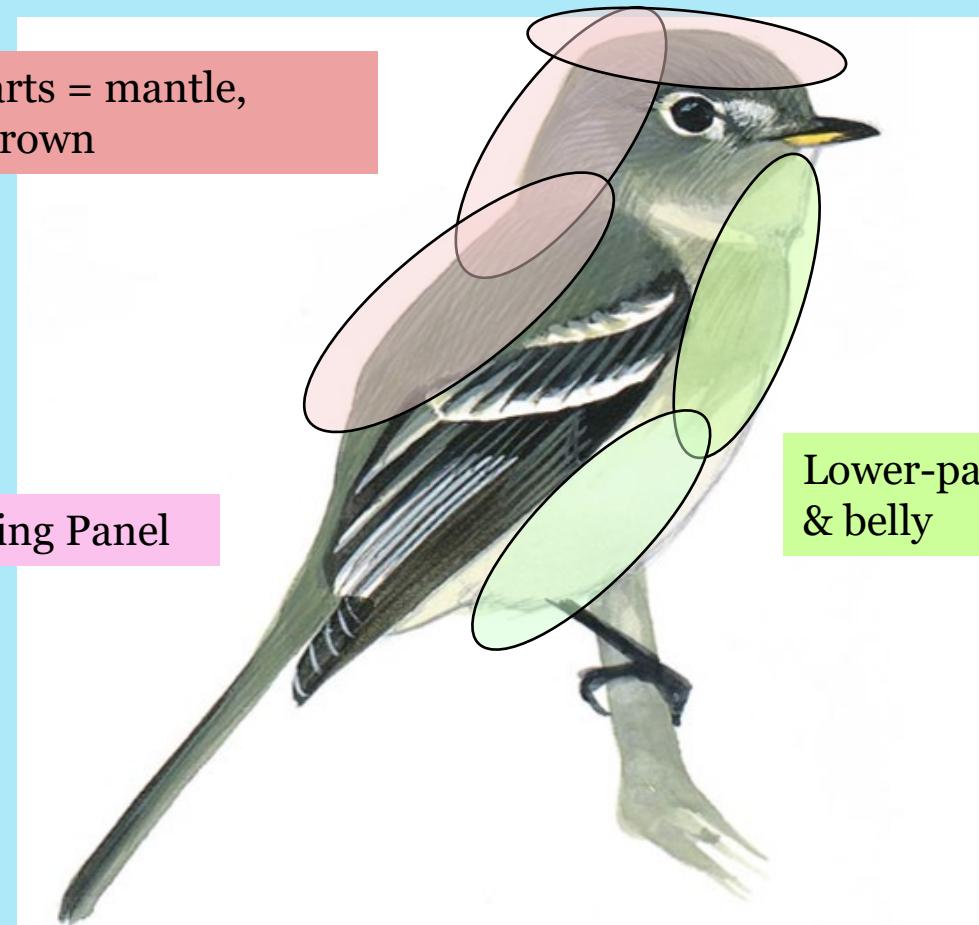


UPPER-PARTS

Upper-parts = mantle,
nape, & crown

Wing Panel

Lower-parts = throat, chest,
& belly



LOWER-PARTS

Upper-parts = mantle,
nape, & crown

Lower-parts = throat, chest,
& belly



EASTERN EMPIDS BY DAVID A. SIBLEY

Least



Yellow-bellied



Acadian



**“Trails”
(Willow)**



**“Trails”
(Alder)**



All Illustrations
by David A. Sibley
From *Sibley Birds*
app

EASTERN EMPIDS

Least



Yellow-bellied



Acadian



“Trails” (Willow)



“Trails” (Alder)



UPPER PARTS

Least



Photo by James Bozeman

Upper body: Fairly uniform brownish gray, usually somewhat darker brown on the forehead and washed with olive on the back.

Wings: Contrast is usually obvious, with blackish ground color setting off white wing-bars and tertial edges.

Wing bars: bold and whitish on fresh adults.

UPPER PARTS

Least



Photo by Shirley Pulgar-Hughs

Upper body: Fairly uniform brownish gray, usually somewhat darker brown on the forehead and washed with olive on the back.

Wings: Contrast is usually obvious, with blackish ground color setting off white wing-bars and tertial edges.

Wing bars: bold and whitish on fresh adults.

UPPER PARTS

Least



Photo by Logan Smith

Upper body: Fairly uniform brownish gray, usually somewhat darker brown on the forehead and washed with olive on the back.

Wings: Contrast is usually obvious, with blackish ground color setting off white wing-bars and tertial edges.

Wing bars: bold and whitish on fresh adults.

UPPER PARTS

Least



Photo by Daniel Jauvin

Upper body: Fairly uniform brownish gray, usually somewhat darker brown on the forehead and washed with olive on the back.

Wings: Contrast is usually obvious, with blackish ground color setting off white wing-bars and tertial edges.

Wing bars: bold and whitish on fresh adults.

UPPER PARTS

Yellow-bellied



Photo by Luke Seitz

Upper body: Distinctly greenish and brighter than most other Empids.

Wings: Strongly blackish showing high-contrast with the whitish edged tertials and secondaries and the yellowish white wing bars.

Wing Bars: Whitish edged tertials and secondaries and yellowish white wing bars.

UPPER PARTS

Yellow-bellied



Photo by Steve Tucker

Upper body: Distinctly greenish and brighter than most other Empids.

Wings: Strongly blackish showing high-contrast with the whitish edged tertials and secondaries and the yellowish white wing bars.

Wing Bars: Whitish edged tertials and secondaries and yellowish white wing bars.

UPPER PARTS

Acadian



Upper body: Very green above. Uniformly greenish olive from crown to rump, fades into a slightly paler and brighter green in the malar area.

Wings: Fairly blackish and show high contrast with wing-bars and tertial and secondary edges.

Wing bars: 2 whitish or yellowish white wing-bars and whitish edged tertials and secondaries.

UPPER PARTS

Acadian



Upper body: Very green above. Uniformly greenish olive from crown to rump, fades into a slightly paler and brighter green in the malar area.

Wings: Fairly blackish and show high contrast with wing-bars and tertial and secondary edges.

Wing bars: 2 whitish or yellowish white wing-bars and whitish edged tertials and secondaries.

UPPER PARTS

“Trails” (Alder)



Photo by Yves Darveau

Upper Body: Greenish cast on back. Darker head than eastern Willow.

Tends to be strongly washed with olive on the upperparts and have clear gray tones on the face.

Wings: Very dark with sharply contrasting tertial edges. Contrast in the wing pattern may be lessened by dull wing bars and tertial edgings, so wings may not look as sharply contrasting.

Wing Bars: wing bars and tertial edgings are often somewhat dull.

UPPER PARTS

“Trails” (Alder)



Photo by Sherrie Quillen

Upper Body: Greenish cast on back. Darker head than eastern Willow.

Tends to be strongly washed with olive on the upperparts and have clear gray tones on the face.

Wings: Very dark with sharply contrasting tertial edges. Contrast in the wing pattern may be lessened by dull wing bars and tertial edgings, so wings may not look as sharply contrasting.

Wing Bars: wing bars and tertial edgings are often somewhat dull.

UPPER PARTS

“Trails” (Willow)



Photo by Owen Strickland

Upper Body: Overall drab. Distinctly brownish. Eastern birds have a touch of olive on the back. Facial expression is plain.

Wings : Blackish.

Wings Bars: Wing-bars and tertial edges generally whitish but dull, contrasting strongly with blackish wings.

“Trails” (Willow)



Photo by Michael J. Good

UPPER PARTS

Upper Body: Overall drab. Distinctly brownish. Eastern birds have a touch of olive on the back. Facial expression is plain.

Wings : Blackish.

Wings Bars: Wing-bars and tertial edges generally whitish but dull, contrasting strongly with blackish wings.

LOWER PARTS

LOWER PARTS

Least



Photo by Deny Swaby

Lower body: Gray-brown wash across breast. Flanks, belly and undertail coverts pale yellow to white-ish.

Throat: Whitish or off white (not bright white), contrasting with the darker face and gray-brown wash across breast.

LOWER PARTS

Least



Photo by David Nickerson

Lower body: Gray-brown wash across breast. Flanks, belly and undertail coverts pale yellow to white-ish.

Throat: Whitish or off white (not bright white), contrasting with the darker face and gray-brown wash across breast.

LOWER PARTS

Least



Photo by Gilian Kirkwood

Lower body: Gray-brown wash across breast. Flanks, belly and undertail coverts pale yellow to white-ish.

Throat: Whitish or off white (not bright white), contrasting with the darker face and gray-brown wash across breast.

LOWER PARTS

Yellow-bellied



Photo by Luke Seitz

Lower body: Most consistently yellow on underparts of any Empid. Fairly uniform in body plumage – above and below.

Color is grayish yellow or yellow washed over a pale gray background.

Sides of breast usually have a strong greenish olive wash. Most birds show a distinct olive wash on breast which continues down the sides.

Throat: The yellow throat is the most distinctive character among eastern empids. Throat does not contrast sharply with the sides of the head.

LOWER PARTS

Yellow-bellied



Photo by Jake Cvetas

Lower body: Most consistently “yellow” on underparts of any Empid. Fairly uniform in body plumage – above and below.

Color is grayish yellow or yellow washed over a pale gray background.

Sides of breast usually have a strong greenish olive wash. Most birds show a distinct olive wash on breast which continues down the sides.

Throat: The yellow throat is the most distinctive character among eastern empids. Throat does not contrast sharply with the sides of the head.

LOWER PARTS

Acadian



Photo by Deny Swaby

Lower body: faint olive wash across upper breast and faint yellowish wash on belly and undertail coverts. Pale white lower breast.

Throat: Even though the throat is white or grayish **it does not contrast sharply** with the face because of the **pale green malar area**, which is one of the most obvious visual marks of the species.

LOWER PARTS

Acadian



Photo by Sue Barth

Lower body: faint olive wash across upper breast and faint yellowish wash on belly and undertail coverts. Pale white lower breast.

Throat: Even though the throat is white or grayish **it does not contrast sharply** with the face because of the **pale green malar area**, which is one of the most obvious visual marks of the species.

LOWER PARTS

“Trails” (Alder)



Photo by Ian Davis

Lower Body: Faint grayish wash across the breast. Whitish or slightly yellowish belly. Faint breast band.

Throat: The most consistent plumage character of “Trails” is the white throat, contrasting noticeably with the face and usually contrasting somewhat with a faint breast band. More contrasting white throat than Acadian.

LOWER PARTS

“Trails” (Alder)



Lower Body: Faint grayish wash across the breast. Whitish or slightly yellowish belly. Faint breast band.

Throat: The most consistent plumage character of “Trails” is the white throat, contrasting noticeably with the face and usually contrasting somewhat with a faint breast band. More contrasting white throat than Acadian.

LOWER PARTS

“Trails” (Willow)



Photo by Isaac Denzer

Lower Body: Pale with a brownish often broken wash on the breast and dirty, white underparts sometimes slightly tinged with yellow.

Throat: The most consistent plumage character of “Trails” is the white throat, contrasting noticeably with the face and usually contrasting somewhat with a faint breast band. More contrasting white throat than Acadian.

“Trails” (Willow)

LOWER PARTS

Lower Body: Pale with a brownish often broken wash on the breast and dirty, white underparts sometimes slightly tinged with yellow.

Throat: The most consistent plumage character of “Trails” is the white throat, contrasting noticeably with the face and usually contrasting somewhat with a faint breast band. More contrasting white throat than Acadian.

