

ID OF EMPIDONAX FLYCATCHERS OF THE ABA AREA

CRUCIAL ATTRIBUTES (see "The Empid Checklist" for additional attributes)	EASTERN				WESTERN				
	Least	Yellow-bellied	"Traill's" (Willow & Alder)	Acadian	Gray	Hammond's	Dusky	"Western" (Cordilleran & Pacific-slope)	Buff-breasted
Overview	Most numerous migrant in most of eastern North America. Also occurs as a regular vagrant in the west. Short primary projection, compact build and eye-ring are the first things to observe.	An early fall migrant. Separated from Acadian by yellow chin & throat, as well as more compact structure. Regarded as "the cute one" by banders. The yellow throat is the most distinctive character among eastern Empids .	Distinguished by large bill, indistinct or lacking eye-ring, and white throat contrasting with diffuse, dull olive to brownish breast band. One (or more) subspecies of Willow also present in the West. Pale green malar.	A relatively large, long-winged Empid with long primary projection & heavy bill (long, deep, & broad) with mostly pale yellowish) lower mandible. The bill is the longest & broadest of any Empid.	Tail-dipping is the most distinctive behavioral trait of any Empid.	Often confused with Dusky , with much overlap in plumage. Best field marks are the tiny bill (short & thin) and the long primary projection. Often holds the wings away from body, accentuating long primaries.	Intermediate between Hammond's and Gray in structure, plumage, and nesting habitat.	Pacific-slope & Cordilleran are generally not separable in the field except by breeding location. Distinguished from other Empids by overall greenish color, crested-look, shape of eye-ring and typically yellow lower mandible.	Identified by its buffy plumage and very restricted range in the United States (a small area of southern Arizona). The smallest Empid, with tiny bill and roundish build. Birders generally must travel to Arizona or Mexico to see the bird, but should also keep an eye out in the Davis Mountains of Texas where until about 2013 it bred.
Wings & primary projection	Short primary projection. Wings barely project to base of tail.	Short to moderate primary projection. Relatively long winged.	Moderate primary projection.	Long primary projection. Long-winged.	Short primary projection.	Long primary projection.	Short for size of bird, thus it seems longer-tailed than Hammond's .	Fairly short primary projection.	
Tail proportions & shape	Short, narrow tail; like a popsicle stick.	Short narrow tail is constricted at the base rather than parallel sided.	Moderately long, broad-based and parallel-sided -- a sturdy tail.	Medium length, broad-based & nearly parallel sided. May appear short due to long primary projection.	Long-tailed	Proportionately short, slightly notched.	Long-ish, narrow, square or notched. Appears long-tailed.	Fairly long, narrow tail. May appear slightly long-tailed for its size.	
Bill size, shape & color(s)	Short & intermediate in width. Triangular, yellow-orange lower mandible sometimes has ill-defined dusky tip.	Large for size of bird, broad at base. Slightly convex outer edges. Lower mandible all orange-yellow.	Wide and may seem to have a slightly convex edge. Lower mandible usually all yellowish pink, but sometimes has a small dusky tip.	Largest bill of any Empid. Long and broad (especially at the base) with slightly convex outer edges. Lower mandible almost always entirely pinkish yellow.	Long, narrow, straight-sided. Lower mandible with mall well-defined black tip.	Narrow, thin, straight-sided & short. 2/3 or more of lower mandible is dark.	Fairly thin and long, seems flat on top. Lower mandible mostly yellow-orange with dusky tip that bleeds into the paler base.	Big, wide-based, triangular. Lower mandible all yellow-orange.	
Head shape & proportion to body	Head looks proportionately large.	Large, round head. Shorter tail accentuates the front-heavy, big-headed look.	Slender head. In combination with the long bill, the slender head makes this species appear very long-faced.	Large head & large bodied. Often with a slightly pushed-out look to the face.	Long bill may make head look proportionately small.	Large, blocky head and pushed-in face.	Medium-sized.	Proportionately large-headed.	
Crown of head (peak, crest)	Roundish head.	Crown usually smoothly rounded, occasionally slight crest.	Sometimes gently rounded, sometimes peaked toward the rear, but always slender.	Forehead and fore part of the crown look flat, often sloping up gradually, or low and smoothly rounded.	Rounded.	Slightly peaked just back of center.	Round to flat.	Distinctly peaked at rear of crown.	
Body shape	Small and compact with short wings. Round body with thin tail.	Small and compact; appears large headed & short-tailed. Pudgy.	A lanky, plain, brownish, pewee-like Empid. Large, long-bodied.	Solid, well-trimmed body. Big, sturdy.	Large, slender & evenly proportioned	Compact overall, with short tail & neck & large head.	Medium in size, shape, and plumage between Hammond's & Gray . Average.	A classically built Empid; not long, not short. Burly chest.	
Eye-ring	Bold, complete, but messy eye-ring. Of uniform width.	Complete, conspicuous & yellow-ish. Nearly uniform width.	Varies from conspicuous, but narrow, to virtually absent.	Faint to narrow, pale yellow with large, prominent eye.	Complete, inconspicuous white eye-ring.	Complete, conspicuous, white, well-defined. Often thicker behind eye.	White, well-developed, not always conspicuous, sometimes broken.	Conspicuous, white with distinctive shape -- narrow or broken at top, broadened to a point behind.	
Throat color & contrast	Whitish, contrasting with darker face & gray-brown wash across breast.	Low contrast yellow throat. Olive malar blends to yellow-olive throat.	White throat that contrasts well with the dark sides of the face and breast band.	White or gray-ish throat does not contrast sharply with face due to pale green malar.	Pale gray, no sharp demarcation or contrast.	Gray-ish head & throat. No sharp contrast between the face & throat.	Low contrast, pale gray throat.	Low contrast throat. Only western Empid with grayish yellow on throat.	
Additional Key Points of ID	Most common migrant Empid in the East. Occasionally molts on breeding grounds.	Yellow belly cannot be relied upon as the only point of ID.	The most consistent plumage character is white throat, contrasting noticeably with face.	Molts on breeding grounds in late summer, so is in fresh plumage in fall. Usually longer billed than any other Empid.	Tail-dipping is the most distinctive behavioral trait of any Empid.	Where their ranges overlap, Hammond's breeds at the highest elevations, Gray at the lowest, with Dusky in between. Molts on breeding grounds in late summer, so fresh plumage in fall.	Often identified mainly by elimination rather than by any distinctive feature of its own.	Only western Empid with grayish yellow on throat.	
Willow and Alder were formally considered to be a single species known as "Traill's Flycatcher". Likewise, Cordilleran & Pacific-slope were formerly considered a single species known as "Western Flycatcher". These birds are best separated by songs, calls & breeding locations. Silent migrants are often identified only as "Traill's" or "Western".									
COMPILED & EDITED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES BY Jeffrey E. Patterson: 1) <i>National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America</i> , (7th Edition) Alderfer, Jonathan, Dunn, Jon L., 2017. 2) <i>The Sibley Guide to Birds</i> , Sibley, David Allan, 2000. 3) <i>Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion: A Comprehensive Resource for Identifying North American Birds</i> , Dunne, Pete, 2006. 4) <i>Field Guide to Advanced Birding</i> , Kaufman, Kenn., 2011. 5) <i>Birding in the American West: A Handbook</i> , Zammer, Kevin J., 2000. 6) <i>Peterson Reference Guide to Birding by Impression: A Different Approach to Knowing and Identifying Birds</i> , 2015 Karlson, Kevin T., Rosselet, Dale. 7) <i>Empid Identification PowerPoint</i> , Lee, Cin-Ty, https://static.squarespace.com/static/549b9b6e4b07b4e7d145b55/1573874960b9e908af3f0a48/1463450185977/Empid-identification.pdf . 8) <i>The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Birds of the World</i> online, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology.									