

EMPIDONAX CHECKLIST: EASTERN EMPIDS (10/1/20)

#	ATTRIBUTE	LEAST FLYCATCHER
	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.
1 (A)	Structure	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection)
2		Shape of primary tips
3 (B)		Tail proportions & shape
4 (A)		Bill
5 (A)		Head
6		Crown of head (peak, crest)
7		Forehead slope
8 (A)		Body
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring
10		Wing-bars
11 (B)		Throat color & contrast
12 (B)		Upper parts
13 (B)		Lower parts
14		Complete prebasic molt on the wintering grounds and thus will appear worn and faded by late summer and fall. Drab and very pale below with narrow wing-bars. Spring pre-alternate molt that involves body plumage and variable numbers of coverts, so wing-bars often broad and fresh in spring. Molt mostly completed before northward migration, but some young birds may have a disheveled appearance. Juveniles undergo a partial prebasic molt before leaving the breeding grounds -- thus fresh and brighter in the fall.
15		Habitat/Micro-habitat
16	Other	Active, often changing perches. Lots of flicking of the tail and wings. Often jerking the tail upward and flicking the wings at the same time. Flicks tail at times in a quick down-up motion (faster than Gray). Penchant for hanging out just below the canopy.
17 (A')		Emphatic CHEbek or cheBIK repeated rapidly.
18 (B)		Sharp whit also sometimes in series. Somewhat harder than the similar calls of Willow , Gray and Dusky . Has been compared to a distant Yellow-rumped Warbler . Most vocal Empid in migration.
19		Circum-gulf migrant. Most adults are gone from North America before September.
20		Most common Empid in the East. Only Willow has a similar whit call. Smaller than Willow , Alder , Acadian . Smaller size, smaller bill, shorter primary extension and more prominent eye-ring. Yellow-bellied is similar in size and shape but usually much stronger green and yellow tones. Some fall Yellow-bellied may have worn to grayish -- still have larger bills and different calls. Also less contrast between face and grayish white throat. In the west, closest in appearance with Dusky and Hammond's . Hammond's has a shorter & thinner bill which is typically mostly or entirely dusky. Hammond's has longer primary projection and primaries more pointed at the tip. Hammond's shows more head-back contrast, a stronger "vested" appearance and a grayer throat. Peak call is different. Dusky has longer and thinner bill usually with more extensive dark lower mandible. Also has a short primary extension. Dusky's tail is a bit longer and possibly narrower at the base. Dusky has a longer less compact shape. Least will have a whiter throat and blacker wings that contrast more with the whitish-edged tertials and secondaries. In the east the Least is structurally only similar to the Yellow-bellied , but can be separated by plumage colors. Only Least , Acadian , Yellow-bellied , Cordilleran and Pacific Slope have the tear-drop shaped eye-ring. 1/2 inch smaller than Acadian , Willow , Alder ; 1/4 inch smaller than Hammond's . Yellow-bellied is larger headed and more portly; Acadian is larger, bigger-billed and more robust; Alder/Willow are lankier and bigger-billed; Hammond's is longer winged and narrower billed.

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#	ATTRIBUTE	YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER	
Overview		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.	
1 (A)	Structure	Wings	Relatively long wings. Short to moderate primary projection.
2		Shape of primary tips	
3 (B)		Tail	Short narrow tail is constricted at the base rather than parallel sided.
4 (A)		Bill	Rather large for the size of the bird, looking broad at the base and with slightly convex outer edges. Lower mandible entirely orange-yellow.
5 (A)		Head	Large, round head. Shorter tail accentuates the front-heavy, big-headed look.
6		Head	Crown of head (peak, crest)
7		Head	Forehead slope
8 (A)		Body	Body shape
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring	Complete, conspicuous and somewhat yellow-ish, but normally not as crisply defined as Least . Usually of nearly uniform width (slightly thicker posteriorally). Occasional individuals may hint at teardrop shaped eye-ring.
10		Wing-bars	Yellowish white wing-bars are very conspicuous. Wings are quite black, contrasting with the green back and setting off the wing-bars and tertial edges in strong contrast. Juveniles often have buffy wing-bars.
11 (B)		Throat color & contrast	Low contrast yellow throat. Olive malar blends to yellow-olive throat.
12 (B)		Upper parts	Distinctly greenish and brighter than most other Empids (except some " Westerns " in spring or freshly molted Acadians in fall). Wings are strongly blackish showing high-contrast with the whitish edged tertials and secondaries and the yellowish-white wing bars. Faded fall adults appear browner-winged or dusky-winged, with less contrast.
13 (B)		Lower parts	Tends to look fairly uniform in body plumage, not much paler below than above, although wings show strong contrast. The yellow throat is the most distinctive character among eastern Empids . This color is really grayish yellow or yellow washed over a pale gray background, and it does not contrast sharply with the sides of the head. Sides of breast usually have a strong greenish olive wash. Most consistently yellow on underparts of any Empid . If worn, can be quite pale on the belly. Most birds show a distinct olive wash on breast which continues down the sides.
14		Molt	Complete or incomplete prebasic molt in fall after arriving on winter grounds. Partial prealternate molt in early spring before starting north. In spring they are in fresh plumage with strongly contrasting wing-bars and tertial edges before arriving in North America. By late summer (before migrating south) adults can be so worn and faded that they look mostly gray and white, with narrow wing bars. Juveniles go through an incomplete preformative molt before leaving the nesting grounds, replacing the body plumage and some coverts; they look fresh in fall migration, with the wing-bars appearing rich buff or a mix of yellowish white and buff. Juveniles undergo partial prebasic molt on the natal territory and are thus fresh in late summer and fall. Unlike most Empids adults undergo only a partial prebasic molt, and it takes place on the wintering grounds. So adults in late summer and fall will be faded and worn. Another unusual feature is that adults prebasic molt is followed closely by a complete prealternate molt in late winter, so adults in spring are in fresh plumage.
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat	Nests in bogs, swamps and damp coniferous woods. Usually found in the interior of dense woods, even in migration, so often difficult to observe.
16		Behavior	Active and given to much simultaneous wing and tail flicking. Generally perches fairly low. Likes to forage where it is thick -- in the lower portions of conifers and shrubs; in thickets; and in lush edges and openings in dense forests during migration. Favors wetter areas and woodlands of thickets adjacent to water. Hovers frequently to pluck insects and commonly captures prey on the ground. Wing flicks and tail flicks with an abrupt upward jerk. Usually solitary, but in migration may be in mixed flocks.
17 (A')		Song	Hoarse chebunk or cheberk , very similar to least, but lower, buzzier, softer without strong emphasis. Softer, less emphatic than Least and more casually paced.
18 (B)		Call	Short, clear rising whistle tuwee reminiscent of wood-pewees . Also shorter versions of pwee or pee , a sharp, descending pweew (migrants); somewhat plaintive, long peehk ; a sharp monotone wsee .
19		Migration	Tends to be a late migrant moving through Texas in mid-May. In fall it is an early migrant with many south of the breeding grounds in later August. Circum-gulf migrant.
20		Similar species	Many artistic renderings of this species make it appear more similar to others of the genus than it really is, especially Acadian , which is much larger billed (especially longer) with relatively long wings. Slightly larger than Least , smaller than Acadian . Separated from Acadian by yellow rather than whitish throat and smaller bill. Distinguished from Least by voice, structure, low-contrast throat. Least is more elfin-featured; Acadian more robust, with a longer heavier bill, a more peaked head and a longer tail; Alder/Willow have a more peaked head and are overall gaunt. Extremely similar to " Western ", but on average is more strongly yellow below and green above. Usually separated by range. The eye-ring is more usually circular (rather than teardrop) and the more blackish wings contrast with the whitish tertials and secondary edges. The tail is slightly shorter than " Western ", which accentuates the stubby appearance; the head appears more rounded (not peaked). Approached in general plumage by Acadian , but even bright Acadians should not be as strongly yellowish in the throat. The Acadian is structurally different in overall size, bill size and structure, primary projection and tail structure. When the Acadian does have yellow on the throat, it is usually clear pale yellow, subtly different than the grayish yellow of the Yellow-bellied . Because all Acadians undergo their prebasic molt on the breeding grounds (before migrating south), they will be in fresh plumage with buffy wing-bars when most Yellow-bellied are faded and worn.

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#	ATTRIBUTE	ACADIAN FLYCATCHER
	Overview	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 . Pale green malar.
1 (A)	Wings	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection) Long primary projection. Long-winged.
2		Shape of primary tips Sword-like tips.
3 (B)	Tail	Tail proportions & shape Medium length tail that is broad at the base and nearly parallel sided. Tail may appear relatively short due to long primary projection.
4 (A)	Structure	Bill size, shape & color(s) Largest bill on average of any Empid . Long, deep, and broad (especially at the base) with slightly convex outer edges. Lower mandible almost always entirely pinkish yellow.
5 (A)	Structure	Head shape & proportion to body Large head, often with a somewhat pushed-out face.
6	Head	Crown of head (peak, crest) Forehead and fore part of the crown look flat, often sloping up gradually to a point or corner at the rear edge of crown, but the crown also can look low and smoothly rounded in the rear.
7		Forehead slope Flat forehead.
8 (A)	Body	Body shape A big sturdy Empid (built like a light heavy weight). Solid but well-trimmed body.
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring Narrow, pale yellow eye-ring. The eye is distinctly large and prominent. Eye-ring can be faint on some individuals.
10		Wing-bars The wings show strong contrast, with very blackish ground color setting off the buffy wing-bars and tertial edges.
11 (B)		Throat color & contrast Even though the <u>throat is white or grayish</u> it does not contrast sharply with the face because of the <u>pale green malar area</u> , which is one of the most obvious visual marks of the species.
12 (B)		Upper parts Very green above. Uniformly greenish olive from crown to rump, fades into a slightly paler and brighter green in the malar area of the face. Wings are fairly blackish and show high contrast with the 2 whitish or yellowish-white wing-bars and the whitish edged tertials and secondaries.
13 (B)		Lower parts Underparts show a faint olive wash across upper breast and a faint yellowish wash on the belly and undertail coverts. Pale white lower breast.
14	Plumage	Molt Molts on breeding ground and migrates south in fresh plumage. By mid-summer adults usually look very whitish below and wing-bars usually have become whitish and very narrow. Unlike other eastern Empids , adults undergo a complete molt before leaving the breeding grounds; thus they will be in fresh plumage in fall migration (with yellow wing-bars and yellow wash on the underparts). But they rapidly depart from North America as soon as their molt is completed. Juveniles are very distinctive when they first fledge, rich greenish olive above with conspicuous buff tips to many feathers on the crowns, nape, back and wing coverts, forming a scaled effect. Their underparts may be lightly washed yellow, and they have rich buff wing-bars. They lose the scaly look in a partial molt before they migrate, but don't replace the wing feathers, so retain buff wing bars and underparts may be strongly yellow washed, often including the throat.
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat Broadleaf trees usually near water or high trees within forests. Generally stays inside forested areas, where it may perch low at times but often perches quite high, near the canopy.
16		Behavior A bird of the forest interior -- unlike most other Empids . Generally forages amid the leaves of the lower canopy and understory. Also darts out and hovers to pluck prey. Usually does not return to the same perch and changes perches frequently. Not as active as some of the other Empids . Tends to flick tail and wing less and mostly right after changing perches.
17 (A')		Song Explosive peet-sah! Or peet-sup!
18 (B)		Call Peet is noticeably different than the whit of the Willow or the kep of the Alder .
19	Other	Migration
20		Similar species In fresh plumage average greener than any other save Yellow-bellied and "Westerns" . (Acadian , Hammond's , Buff-breasted and occasionally Least molt on breeding grounds before migrating south. Thus any Empid seen molting in North America is probably one of these 3 more widespread species; any worn adult seen in fall is likely one of the other species (which molt on the wintering grounds)). Length of bill may be matched or even exceeded by long-billed examples of Gray and " Trail's " in general the Acadian is longer billed than any other Empid . Can be very similar in structure to " Trails ", but usually has longer primary extension. Acadian's face is paler than " Trail's " and usually contrasts much less with the white throat, due to the pale green malar region.

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#	ATTRIBUTE	ALDER FLYCATCHER
	Overview	Distinguished by large bill, indistinct or lacking eye-ring, and white throat contrasting with diffuse, dull olive to brownish breast band.
1 (A)	Wings	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection) Moderate primary projection.
2		Shape of primary tips
3 (B)	Tail	Tail proportions & shape Medium length to longish tail that is broad-based and nearly parallel sided (not constricted at the base). Looks noticeably broad compared to the tails of smaller Empids.
4 (A)	Structure	Bill Bill size, shape & color(s) Large broad-based bill (most like that of Acadian , but not as broad at the base) which may seem to have a slightly convex edge. Lower mandible frequently entirely fleshy-pink or yellow-orange, but it just as frequently may show a dusky tip. Bill usually appears dark from below, despite the yellow lower mandible. Slightly shorter-billed than eastern Willow .
5 (A)	Structure	Head Head shape & proportion to body Slender head. In combination with the long bill, the slender head makes this species appear very long-faced.
6	Head	Crown of head (peak, crest) Head is sometimes gently rounded, sometimes peaked toward the rear, but always slender. Possibly rounder-headed than eastern Willow .
7		Forehead slope Shallow to medium forehead slope.
8 (A)	Body	Body shape Large, lanky Empid with a fairly heavy bill and a long-face.
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring Varies from conspicuous, but narrow, to virtually absent. No kick or tear at the rear. Acadian almost always has a conspicuous and complete eye-ring.
10	Plumage	Wing-bars Although the wings are very dark, the contrast in the wing pattern may be lessened by the fact that the wing-bars and tertial edges are often somewhat dull, so the wings may not look as sharply contrasting as in some other eastern Empids . More well-defined white tertial edges, bolder wing-bars and slightly longer primary projection than western subspecies of Willow .
11 (B)	Plumage	Throat color & contrast The most consistent plumage character of Alder (and Willow) is the white throat, contrasting noticeably with the face and usually contrasting somewhat with a faint breastband. More contrasting white throat than Acadian .
12 (B)	Plumage	Upper parts Dark wings with sharply contrasting tertial edges. Greenish cast on back. Darker head than eastern Willow . In fresh plumage, Alder tends to be strongly washed with olive on the upperparts and has clear gray tones on the face.
13 (B)	Plumage	Lower parts Faint grayish wash across the breast. Whitish or slightly yellowish belly.
14	Plumage	Molt In fresh plumage during spring migration. Undergo molt on the wintering grounds so by fall migrating adult Alders (and Willows) are in worn plumage. Wing-bars and eye-ring (if any) may be much reduced by wear and the color of their upper parts will be very drab. Juveniles are somewhat fresher in fall, with buffy wing-bars, more yellow on the belly and slightly more color on the upper parts.
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat Brushy habitats near bogs.
16	Other	Behavior Maneuvers through brush like a frantic warbler. Thrives in low brush and tight vegetative confines (usually within 10 feet of the ground). Tends to be less active. Flicks tail & wings less often.
17 (A)	Other	Song Best distinguished by voice. Alder : A falling wheezy weeb-eo . Willow : a sneezy fitz-bew . Alder 's song is usually written as fee-bee-oh , but seldom sounds clearly three syllabled. Might be better written as rree-BEEP . Strongly accented on the second syllable.
18 (B)	Other	Call Alder : A loud pip . Willow : a liquid wit . Reminiscent of a single note of Olive-sided Flycatcher . Unlike the whit of Willow and other Empids. Reminiscent of the pik-note of Three-toed Woodpecker or the chip of White-throated Sparrow .
19	Other	Migration
20	Other	Similar species Slightly longer primary projection than western subspecies of Willow . Fractionally longer-winged and longer-tailed than eastern Willow . Tend toward dull-olive upper parts in fresh plumage, some Alders can be a bit more greenish. Both Alder & Willow in fresh plumage tend to show some contrast between head and nape (darkish) and the upper back (greenish). Willows usually appear darker, and their nape appears paler (often with grayish tones). On average, Willows tend to be a paler olive or a somewhat brownish olive or grayish olive on the upper parts (even in fresh plumage), with a grayish or brown-tinged olive wash across the chest. Alders tend to be a bit darker green on the upper parts and auriculars, with a purer olive wash across the chest. Further distinguished from Acadian by upper parts coloration (Acadian : paler, livelier green on the face and upper parts; "Trail's": darker, drabber olive, brownish olive or grayish olive). Willow lacks prominent eye-ring. Least is browner above, has shorter bill with dark tip to lower mandible. One of the most "pewee-like" Empids . Virtually identical to eastern subspecies of Willow (except by voice). Fractionally longer-winged and tailed than eastern Willow . Alder & Willow are extremely similar both structural and plumage characteristics, and though minor average differences in morphology exist (and extreme examples of each species can be identified), there is overlap in every character. Silent migrants are best left as "Trail's". "Trail's" tend to be drabber than Westerns , Yellow-bellied , or Acadians . "Trail's" are closest structurally to Acadian , but they typically show less primary projection and slightly thinner bills. Further distinguished from Acadian by voice.

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#	ATTRIBUTE	WILLOW FLYCATCHER
	Overview	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.
1 (A)	Structure	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection) Wings
2		Shape of primary tips
3 (B)		Tail proportions & shape Tail
4 (A)		Bill size, shape & color(s) Bill
5 (A)		Head shape & proportion to body Head
6		Crown of head (peak, crest)
7		Forehead slope
8 (A)		Body shape Body
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring
10		Wing-bars
11 (B)		Throat color & contrast
12 (B)		Upper parts
13 (B)		Lower parts
14		Molt
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat
16		Behavior
17 (A')		Song
18 (B)		Call
19		Migration
20		The extreme similarity between eastern Willows and Alders cannot be stressed enough. Many individuals cannot be identified even in the hand, even by reference to formulae based on careful measurements. With enough experience, eastern birders may be able to say "probably Willow " or "probably Alder " based on visual and then confirm with voice. The relatively dull wing-bars and obscure eye-ring of Willow can make it superficially like a wood-pewee . But pewees have noticeably longer wingtips and narrower bills. Willow subspecies: Trailii in the east. Acastus , brewsteri and extimus in the west. Tend toward dull-olive upper parts in fresh plumage, some Alders can be a bit more greenish. Both Alder & Willow in fresh plumage tend to show some contrast between head and nape (darkish) and the upper back (greenish). Willows usually appear darker, and their nape appears paler (often with grayish tones). On average, Willows tend to be a paler olive or a somewhat brownish olive or grayish olive on the upper parts (even in fresh plumage), with a grayish or brown-tinged olive wash across the chest. Further distinguished from Acadian by upper parts coloration (Acadian : paler, livelier green on the face and upper parts; Trails : darker, drabber olive, brownish olive or grayish olive). Alder bill is slightly shorter, eye-ring usually more prominent, back greener than Willow . Alder has darker head than eastern subspecies of Willow and more well-defined white tertial edges, bolder wing-bars and slightly longer primary projection than western subspecies. Willow lacks prominent eye-ring. Least is browner above, has shorter bill with dark tip to lower mandible and different call.

EMPIDONAX CHECKLIST: WESTERN EMPIDS (10/1/20)

#	ATTRIBUTE	GRAY FLYCATCHER	
	Overview	Tail-dipping is the most distinctive behavioral trait of any Empid.	
1 (A)	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection)	Fairly short primary projection for the size of the bird.	
2	Shape of primary tips		
3 (B)	Tail	Noticeably long-tailed. (Young birds in late summer can be visibly shorter-billed and shorter-tailed than adults).	
4 (A)	Bill	Noticeably long-billed -- of the species with narrow, straight-sided bills, this one is on average the longest-billed (distinctly narrower than Acadian or "Trails"). The lower mandible is mostly pale (fleshy pink or yellowish orange) with a small well-defined blackish area at the tip.	
5 (A)	Head	Head shape & proportion to body	The long bill often makes the head look proportionately small.
6	Head	Crown of head (peak, crest)	Usually looks smoothly rounded.
7	Head	Forehead slope	Moderate.
8 (A)	Body	Body shape	Largish, but slender and evenly proportioned Empid .
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring	Usually a complete white eye-ring which tends to be somewhat inconspicuous owing to the lack of contrast with the pale gray face. Many individuals show the suggestion of a white spectacle formed by the eye-ring and a whitish supraloral stripe between the top of the eye and the forehead.
10	Plumage	Wing-bars	The dusky gray wings have dull whitish wing-bars as well as tertial & secondary edges. Low wing-panel contrast.
11 (B)	Plumage	Throat color & contrast	Very pale gray-- sometimes nearly white-- but there is no sharp separation of color between throat & sides of head.
12 (B)	Plumage	Upper parts	Pale and gray even in fresh plumage. Paler than any other Empid (except the much different Buff-breasted). Upperparts & face are medium gray, with a faint olive wash on the back, but not on the head. The tail is dark gray with a contrasting white outer vane to the outermost pair of tail feathers. Pale band across forehead. Birds in fresh plumage are a bit darker, often with a slight olive tinge to the mantle.
13 (B)	Plumage	Lower parts	Breast is pale to medium gray, usually with a slight olive tinge. Faint yellowish or creamy-buff wash to the belly which may look white in the field.
14	Plumage	Molt	Adults go through a complete molt in fall after arriving on the wintering grounds. Juveniles have a partial molt, mostly involving body plumage, which may begin in late summer near breeding areas, but is mostly completed after fall migration. Thus all Gray are in fresh plumage in early winter. During summer as feathers wear, adult Grays become slightly paler and plainer; the shades of yellow below and olive on the back and chest fade even further. While most Empids become grayer in worn plumage, Gray may tend to look more dusty brown, less purely gray, when worn. By late summer the wing-bars can be essentially worn away.
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat	Breeds in sagebrush desert and foothills, often with pinyon and juniper present. This habitat is unusual amongst Empids and therefore useful in ID.
16	Other	Behavior	Tail-dipping is the most distinctive behavioral trait of any Empid. It begins with a rapid, very slightly upward twitch, followed by a slower, emphasized downward swing, after which the tail is raised to its original position. Recalls a phoebe rather than any other Empid . Some other Empids (e.g. Least) sometimes flick the tail down-up instead of up-down, but these are tail flicks almost too rapid for the eye to follow. Gray is relatively inactive often dipping the tail but only infrequently flicking the wings. When foraging, the Gray tends to perch low and often flies down to take insects on or near the ground.
17 (A')	Other	Song	A simple, uneven repetition of two elements. Most frequent is an emphatic two-syllable note, with a low pitched, almost chirping sound, chuwig . A higher-pitched, weaker teeah is tossed in at irregular intervals. The two phrases are so different they seem unrelated.
18 (B)	Other	Call	
19	Other	Migration	
20	Other	Similar species	Dusky is smaller, but similarly proportioned and worn individuals can appear quite gray. Gray is usually distinctly truer and paler gray above (less olive) and whiter below (less yellowish and with a gray, rather than slightly olive wash to breast. The Gray's bill is longer, and the lower mandible is more extensively pale and has a more sharply delineated dark tip.

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#	ATTRIBUTE	HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER
	Overview	Often confused with Dusky , with much overlap in plumage. Their breeding ranges overlap extensively, but Hammond's generally breeds in higher-elevation habitats. Best field marks are the tiny bill (short & thin) and the long primary projection. Often holds the wings away from body, accentuating long primaries.
1 (A)	Wings	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection) Long wings whose tips sometimes dangle from the bird's side and when fully folded extend beyond the undertail coverts. Longer primary projection than Dusky or Least .
2		Shape of primary tips
3 (B)	Tail	Tail proportions & shape Proportionately short, slightly notched, tail -- the tail is actually of medium length, but because the primary projection is so pronounced, the tail appears short, contributing to the compact, stocky look of the bird. Tail has grayish edges.
4 (A)	Structure Bill	Bill size, shape & color(s) Narrow, straight-sided and usually very short. The smallest bill (in proportion to overall size) of any Empid. Lower mandible is usually at least 2/3 dark, fading to dull dusky yellow or pinkish at the base. In both shape and color, bill seems to be more variable than other Empids . The very small & dark, almost Kinglet -like, bill contributes to the "punched-in" look of the face. .
5 (A)	Head	Head shape & proportion to body The fairly large, blocky head, and pushed-in face recall Ruby-crowned Kinglet .
6		Crown of head (peak, crest)
7		Forehead slope
8 (A)	Body	Body shape Small Empid that tends to look compact overall, with a short tail, short neck, large head and very short bill.
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring The white eye-ring is usually conspicuous, complete, well-defined and frequently thicker behind the eye.
10		Wing-bars Dusky gray wings have wing-bars and tertial edges that look quite buffy in fresh plumage (fall & winter), fading to dull in spring and summer. Low wing panel contrast.
11 (B)		Throat color & contrast Gray-ish head & throat. No sharp contrast between the face & throat.
12 (B)		Upper parts Plumage is variable. Rather dark olive breast and back contrasts with gray head. Tends to be grayish olive when worn and darker olive when fresh. Both colors contrast with the grayer head and face. The wings are dusky, and the wing-bars, tertial edges, and secondary edges are a contrasting creamy-white (buff on fresh or juvenile birds).
13 (B)		Lower parts The whitish throat and slightly yellow-tinged belly are separated by a pale gray vest. In fall, olive-tinged above, with a contrasting gray head, and more yellowish below. The breast is olive-gray or brownish-gray, usually dark, especially towards the sides. The belly is pale to relatively bright yellow. Often the dark color of the breast extends down the sides and flanks creating a "vested" look. Frequently shows some yellow on the flanks and belly, but not on the throat, however, the presence and extent of yellow are highly variable.
14		Molt Adults undergo a complete molt in late summer (late June/July - late August or September), before they leave the breeding grounds. Juveniles have a partial molt (body feathers) before southward migration. Thus, all Hammond's are in fresh plumage during fall migration, with buffy wing-bars, fairly bright yellow on the belly, dark olive-gray on the chest, and contrast between the gray head and olive back. Some undergo a partial prealternate molt on the wintering grounds, of mainly body plumage, but the extent of molt varies by individual. Thus, some are bright and contrasty, while others look dull and faded as they migrate north.
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat Usually found in tall conifers. (Dusky in low chaparral, brush, and small trees.). Prefers wetter, higher elevation forests and more often uses the higher strata of the canopy.
16		Behavior Very active Empid with quick perch changes, flicks the tail frequently, often flicking the wings as well, giving it a nervous, hyperactive look. Forages in deciduous trees, making quick, short (often < 1 foot) sallying flights among leaves and branches. Also hovers, flycatches and forages low in the canopy from low branch to low branch. The propensity for wing flicking and the stubby, compact shape and small bill, lends the Hammond's a kinglet-like GISS.
17 (A')		Song Heard only on breeding grounds. Sings from top, or near top, of conifers, forages in deciduous trees. Vocalizes for long periods on breeding grounds. Song is like Dusky but hoarser and lower pitched, especially on second note. Variable, but made up of three basic elements. 1) a dry rapid, sharply 2-syllabled chi-pit or ts-e-brrk . When given by itself this is similar to Least . 2) a rough, low-pitched brrrk . 3) element is similar but vaguely 2-syllabled and rises in pitch, gurrrip . Song can be distinguished from Dusky , but requires concentration.
18 (B)		Call Most frequent a sharp peep or peek , similar to Pygmy Nuthatch or a single note of Long-billed Dowitcher . Also a soft, descending whistled note and a soft, burry fee-zhee ; both given mainly on the breeding grounds. This call is distinctly different from all other Empids , except Alder with which it is unlikely to be encountered.
19		Migration Most migrate earlier in spring and later in fall than Dusky .
20		Similar species Overall shape of Hammond's is similar to Least , however it's confusion with Dusky is notorious. Many can be separated confidently, while others are difficult, especially when silent. There are structural clues which are helpful for typical birds. Hammond's primary projection is significantly longer than Dusky or Least . Dusky's bill averages longer, with a less extensive dark area at the tip. Dusky has a slightly longer tail on average, emphasized by the much shorter primary projection, and is larger, longer-billed, and shorter-winged. Hammond's is more compact, big-headed, short-billed, short-tailed, and long-winged. The mostly or all dusky lower mandible of the Hammond's is a good clue; most Dusky's will have an extensively yellow-orange lower mandible with dusky tip. Hammond's generally breeds at higher elevation than Dusky . Plumage color can be helpful for much of the year for typical birds, but there is much variation in both species; many individuals will appear somewhat intermediary. Hammond's is often darker than Dusky . In fall, Hammond's will be in fresh plumage after molting in early fall before migration, while Dusky will be worn and faded since most do not molt until after traveling to the wintering grounds. In early fall, Dusky looks either very worn and drab (adults) or fairly pale and somewhat worn (juveniles). By early winter, when a handful of Dusky's can still be found in the southwest, typical individuals may be separated from Hammond's by the combination of bill size and primary extension. Hammond's is distinguished from Least by grayer throat, gray head contrasting with greenish breast and back, narrower bill with mostly dark lower mandible, and weak contrast on wing coverts and tertials. Least has a slightly longer, but noticeably broader-based bill which is typically more extensively pale on the lower mandible. The lower parts of Hammond's , including flanks, are usually duskier than Least .

EMPIDONAX CHECKLIST: WESTERN EMPIDS (10/1/20)

#	ATTRIBUTE	DUSKY FLYCATCHER
	Overview	Often identified mainly by elimination rather than by any distinctive feature of its own. Superficially it seems intermediate between Hammond's and Gray in structure, plumage, and nesting habitat.
1 (A)	Structure	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection)
2		Shape of primary tips
3 (B)		Tail proportions & shape
4 (A)		Bill size, shape & color(s)
5 (A)		Head shape & proportion to body
6		Crown of head (peak, crest)
7		Forehead slope
8 (A)		Body shape
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring
10		Wing-bars
11 (B)		Throat color & contrast
12 (B)		Upper parts
13 (B)		Lower parts
14		SPRING: Most Dusky s in the US will be brighter in spring than in summer or fall. Some individuals will vary in the brightness of their plumage in spring based on the extent of late winter molt. SUMMER: As the summer progresses, many Dusky s fade to the extent that they are gray above and dingy white below, and hence more resemble the Gray . FALL: During fall migration, adults are worn and drab, mostly grayish above and whitish below, with narrow, whitish wing-bars. A few fresh late-fall birds are quite yellow below, but dull compared to Gray . Small numbers winter annually in the southwest and will be brighter after molting. WINTER: Most molts occur on the wintering grounds after fall migration. In early winter (when few remain north of the Mexican border), the freshly molted Dusky s are in their most "colorful" plumage, with fairly bright pale yellow on the belly, olive on the back, olive-gray on the chest and pale buff or yellowish wing-bars. Undergoes another partial molt in late winter, more extensive on some birds than others.
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat
16		Behavior
17 (A')		Song
18 (B)		Call
19		Migration
20	Similar species	Most likely to be confused with Hammond's , but the Dusky 's lack of distinguishing characteristics make it subject to confusing with other Empids as well. During breeding separate by song, and to a lesser extent by habitat and foraging styles. BREEDING: In summer, Hammond's , Dusky and Gray may all be found nesting in the same general regions, but they separate out by elevation and habitat. Hammond's is at the highest elevations, mostly in coniferous forest, although sometimes in aspen. Dusky is at slightly lower elevations in the mountains, in habitat with a mixture of tall trees and lower brush; coniferous forest with a brushy understory or open chaparral with scattered taller trees will meet its needs. Gray favors still lower elevations, mostly arid sagebrush plains with scattered taller trees, also open woodlands of piñon pine and juniper with scattered sage brush. Dusky differs from Hammond's in habitat, structure and voice. Can be confused with Gray , particularly in late summer and fall, when many Dusky s appear distinctly gray and white. At the same period, Gray should appear even paler gray above and more white below. Grays also have a longer bill with a sharply bicolored mandible (pinkish base and well-delineated black tip) on which the dark tip does not bleed into the pale base, as on Dusky . The Gray has the distinctive habit, unique among empids of slowly dipping its tail downward rather than quickly flicking it up and then down. Separation from Least can be challenging if either species strays from its normal range. Least tends to have a slightly whiter throat, shorter tail, and more contrast in the wings. Least 's bill is proportionately wider, and it usually has an entirely pale lower mandible.

EMPIDONAX CHECKLIST: WESTERN EMPIDS (10/1/20)

#	ATTRIBUTE	"WESTERN" FLYCATCHER
	Overview	Pacific-slope & Cordilleran are generally not separable in the field. Distinguished from other Empids by overall greenish color, crested-look, eye-ring shape and typically yellow lower mandible.
1 (A)	Structure	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection)
2		Shape of primary tips
3 (B)		Tail proportions & shape
4 (A)		Bill size, shape & color(s)
5 (A)		Head shape & proportion to body
6		Crown of head (peak, crest)
7		Forehead slope
8 (A)		Body shape
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring
10		Wing-bars
11 (B)		Throat color & contrast
12 (B)		Upper parts
13 (B)		Lower parts
14		Molt
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat
16		Behavior
17 (A')		Song
18 (B)		Call
19		Migration
20		Virtually no difference in color between the Cordilleran and Pacific-slope . The strong green and yellow tones will usually separate the Western from other Empids in its range. But in late summer and fall, some Westerns have no visible yellow on the throat. Note the wide bill with pale lower mandible, appearance of the eye-ring, call notes, etc. In winter in the southwest, may be mistaken for Hammond's or Dusky because those species have conspicuous yellow on the belly at that season. However, the lack of yellow on the throat on these fresh-plumaged winter birds should eliminate confusion. Western vs Yellow-bellied may be more difficult. Although their normal ranges barely overlap, stray Westerns and Yellow-bellied do turn up out of range. Call-notes are the best distinction. Overall colors differ slightly; Yellow-bellied has stronger green tones, while Western tends toward duller green above and more buffy or brownish-yellow below. Yellow-bellied tend to have blacker wings, setting off the wing-bars and tertial edges in sharper contrast. The eye-ring tends to be more tear-drop shaped in Western and of more even thickness on the Yellow-bellied . Western tends to be slightly longer-tailed and to have more peak to the crown, while Yellow-bellied may look more round-headed or bushy-headed. However, all of these points are variable, subtle and hard to detect without direct comparison.

EMPIDONAX CHECKLIST: EASTERN EMPIDS (9/24/20)

#	ATTRIBUTE	PEWEES
	Overview	
1 (A)	Wings	Wing proportions (wing length & primary projection) Longer wings than Empids , often appearing to extend a third of the way down the tail.
2		Shape of primary tips
3 (B)	Tail	Tail proportions & shape Short straight tail.
4 (A)	Structure	Bill Bill size, shape & color(s) Narrower bill than Willow . Black upper mandible, dull orange lower mandible.
5 (A)		Head Head shape & proportion to body Large, somewhat shaggy and peaked head.
6	Head	Crown of head (peak, crest) Shaggy and peaked. More distinctly peaked than Empids .
7		Forehead slope
8 (A)	Body	Body shape Larger than Empids . Smaller than Eastern Phoebe . Sturdier and more angular than Eastern Phoebe . Wide body. Shorter legs than Empids , so often appear to be sitting on feet.
9 (A)	Plumage	Eye-ring Only a hint of an eye-ring (just a narrow pale area behind the eye). Black eye, set on the pale gray face.
10		Wing-bars Adults: obvious white wing-bars. Juveniles: buffy wing-bars. However, wing-bars are usually less distinct than most Empids (but the same could be said for many Willows).
11 (B)	Plumage	Throat color & contrast Not so contrastingly white on the throat as Willow .
12 (B)		Upper parts Dark (in comparison to Empids). Overall grayish with a slight greenish cast to the back and no distinct contrast between the head and back. Paler on nape. Western Wood-pewee averages darker.
13 (B)	Plumage	Lower parts Whitish or pale yellow below. Dusky "vest" (heavier than Empids). Grayish "smudges" on undertail coverts.
14		Molt
15	Other	Habitat/Micro-habitat In and along edges of woods.
16		Behavior Chooses fairly high conspicuous perches and returns to it repeatedly. Does not flick the tail when perched.
17 (A')	Other	Song Slow, measured 2-part plaintive lament -- a question followed by an answer. A 2 or 3 note question " Pee-wHEE? " or " Pee-ur-EE? " ending on a high note, followed by a long pause and then a reply " PEE-ur ".
18 (B)		Call
19	Other	Migration
20		Similar species

THE EMPID CHECKLIST

COMPILED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES BY Jeffrey E. Patterson

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- 6) *Peterson Reference Guide to Birding by Impression: A Different Approach to Knowing and Identifying Birds* , 2015 Karlson, Kevin T., Rosselet, Dale.
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