The First Record of Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) in British Columbia.

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Submitted: April 15, 2019.

**Introduction and Distribution**


The Eastern Wood-Pewee is a long-distance Nearctic–Neotropical migrant moving annually between its breeding range in North America to its overwintering range in northwestern South America (Watt *et al.* 2017). Unlike most other eastern North American tyrant-flycatchers that cross the Gulf of Mexico to overwintering grounds in South America (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2004), the Eastern Wood-Pewee is more likely to pass through eastern Mexico than to cross the Gulf (American Ornithologists' Union 1998).
The Eastern Wood-Pewee winters primarily in northern South America from northwestern Colombia and northeastern Venezuela (De Schauensee and Phelps 1978, Hilty and Brown 1986, Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990, Ridgely and Tudor 1994, Restall et al. 2006) south to southern Peru, northern Bolivia, and Amazonian Brazil (Fitzpatrick 1980b, Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990, Sick 1993, Ridgely and Tudor 1994). This species is found as far west as coastal Colombia and the Andes in Ecuador and Peru (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990, Ridgely and Tudor 1994). The Eastern Wood-Pewee has been recorded as an uncommon to locally common transient and overwintering resident in the lowlands and foothills of both eastern and western Ecuador from October–May (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001). This species is a locally common migrant and overwintering resident, recorded from September 13–April 23 in Venezuela (Hilty 2002). The Eastern Wood-Pewee is a fairly common species from September–April on the east slopes of the Andes below 1,400 m and to Amazonia in Peru (Schulenberg et al. 2007). The distribution of this species throughout Colombia is listed as common in middle elevation forest clearings (Munves 1975). The eastern winter range limit of the Eastern Wood-Pewee is uncertain in Brazil, but there are skin specimens that have been collected from as far west as Manaus in Brazil and there are undocumented records from French Guiana (Stotz et al. 1992, Tostain et al. 1992, Ridgely and Tudor 1994). The overall winter range of the Eastern Wood-Pewee in Brazil is shown as western Amazonia with a few scattered locations in other parts of the country (van Perlo 2009).

The overwintering distribution of the Eastern Wood-Pewee in Central America is generally given as patchy (Ridgely and Gwynne 1989, Watt et al. 2017). This species is recorded as rare (Stiles and Skutch 1989) to uncommon (Slud 1964) overwintering resident in Costa Rica.

The Eastern Wood-Pewee is seldom reported outside of its normal range (Watt et al. 2017). This species is a casual vagrant in states bordering its breeding range in the western United States (American Ornithologists' Union 1983, Andrews and Righter 1992). The Eastern Wood-Pewee is a casual or accidental vagrant off Labrador (320 km at sea), Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Bermuda and Barbados (American Ornithologists' Union 1998).

Along the west coast of North America the only accepted records of the Eastern Wood-Pewee involve birds that were photographed and vocalizations were heard and in most cases were recorded (Hamilton et al. 2007). To date there are very few records of the Eastern Wood-Pewee from western North America which is due to its overall similarity to the Western Wood-Pewee (Contopus sordidulus) (Hamilton et al. 2007). There is 1 accepted record for Washington State by the Washington Bird Records Committee of a bird that was both recorded and photographed in Lind Coulee, in Grant County that returned 3 years in a row from August 21-31, 2013; July 30 - August 17, 2014; July 30 - August 19, 2015 (WRBC 2018). There are 2 accepted records for Oregon by the Oregon Bird Records Committee involving singing birds,
both were found at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge with the first found in August 1953 and the second was photographed from May 28-30, 1994 (OFO 2016). There are 14 accepted records of the Eastern Wood-Pewee for California by the California Bird Records Committee that span the months of June to early November, with some birds being banded and documented at banding stations (Hamilton et al. 2007, Tietz and McCaskie 2018). There are no records for Alaska (Gibson et al. 2019). This is a recent addition to the avifauna of British Columbia with a fall bird that was well photographed and was heard vocalizing in the Deroche area of the Upper Fraser Valley in September 2018 (R. Toochin Pers. Comm.)

**Identification and Similar Species**

The identification of the Eastern Wood-Pewee is covered in all standard North American field guides. This is a medium sized passerine measuring 16 cm in length, with a wingspan of 25.4 cm, and weighing 14 grams (Sibley 2000, Dunn and Alderfer 2011). Adult Eastern Wood-Peewees are grayish-olive above and pale below with a slightly darker wash on the breast and sides, and have whitish wing-bars (Sibley 2000, Dunn and Alderfer 2011, Watt et al. 2017). The upper mandible is dark; the lower mandible is pale-orange with a dark tip (Dunn and Alderfer 2011, Watt et al. 2017). The sexes are similar in appearance (Watt et al. 2017). Juvenile birds are darker with yellower underparts (Watt et al. 2017). This species sits in an upright position typical of flycatchers, but often has tail held down below the extension of the primaries and back giving it a curved profile (Lee et al. 2008). It is important to note that the Western Wood-Pewee sits with a more vertical and straighter back-to-tail profile, giving birds a straight angular posture (Lee et al. 2008). This field mark is very useful when looking at photographs of potential vagrants (Lee et al. 2008). Like other flycatcher species the Eastern Wood-Peweehawks for flying insects, but does not flick wings or wag its tail (Watt et al. 2017).

The difficulty in identification is separating this species from its sibling species, the Western Wood-Pewee which measures 16 cm in length, a wingspan of 26.67 cm, and weighs 13 grams (Sibley 2000, Dunn and Alderfer 2011) and is a common breeding species throughout British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1997). By far the best way to distinguish the 2 species is by song (Lee et al. 2008). The Eastern Wood-Pewee gives a clear “pee-ah-wee” song that is very distinct from the harsh, buzzy, “peeer” of the Western Wood-Pewee (Watt et al. 2017). The non-breeding call note of the Eastern Wood-Pewee is a high, strongly up slurred whistle versus the slightly lower-pitched and nearly monotone call of the Western Wood-Pewee (Sibley 2019). Both migrant birds and wintering birds of both species often give clear whistled notes (Sibley 2019). The Eastern Wood-Pewee consistently gives a strongly up-slurred 2-part sounding “tu-eee” call while the Western Wood-Pewee gives a slightly lower and flat single sounding “teee” call, often ending with a more or less obvious burry quality (Sibley 2019).
Some plumage characters may differ between the species, but because there is some overlap, they are not reliable alone for separating the species (Rising and Schueler 1980, Dunn and Garrett 1983, Kaufman 1990a). In general, the upperparts are paler and may be tinged with green in the Eastern Wood-Pewee; the colour of the chest and sides is darker and browner in the Western Wood-Pewee, which, unlike the Eastern Wood-Pewee, typically shows dusky colour extending down the sides to flanks (Watt et al. 2017). The chest band of the Eastern Wood-Pewee may be tinged with green and this is never the case with Western Wood-Pewee (Watt et al. 2017). The lower mandible of the adult Eastern Wood-Pewee is less dark than that of the Western Wood-Pewee; the dark colour may be more extensive in the Western Wood-Pewee (Watt et al. 2017). Separation is complicated if juvenile Eastern Wood-Pewees are present, which are generally darker below than adults and have dark bills more similar to the Western Wood-Pewee (Watt et al. 2017).

Analyses of wing and tail morphology based on museum specimens (Pyle 1997a, Hubbard 2002) provide details for identification of birds in the hand. The Eastern Wood-Pewee averages a slightly longer-tailed and shorter-winged appearance than the Western Wood-Pewee (Sibley 2019). Pyle (1997) reports that a formula using tail projection (tip of tail to tip of longest uppertail covert) minus primary projection (tip of longest primary to tip of longest secondary) identifies about 97.5% of all specimens regardless of age, sex, or season. Lee et al. (2008) shows from photographs that the primary extension is shorter to the tail tip on Eastern Wood-Pewee and equal on Western Wood-Pewees. For analysis and photographs showing how to use the wing to tail measurement formula it is highly recommended that keen observers read Pyle 1997, Pyle 1997a, Hubbard 2002, and Lee et al. (2008).

Other subtle indicators in posture can be useful in identification such as Western Wood-Pewee is a bird that perches at an angle where the tail is more in line with the body giving the wings and tail the appearance of looking virtually straight, like a ruler (Lee et al. 2008, Sibley 2019). Analysis of photographs of the Eastern Wood-Pewee show that this species does not sit as straight and will hold the tail downward giving the bird a more curved appearance (Lee et al. 2008). A good summarization in Lee et al. (2008) gives the following field marks as important in aiding in the identification of both species of Wood-Pewees (these are listed in order of importance): vocalizations, the ratio of primary extension to tail extension, posture and tail angle, contrast between upper and lower wing bars, lower mandible colouration, and overall colouration of underparts and upper parts. It is important to stress that subtle features alone will not identify an apparent vagrant Eastern Wood-Pewee, but together these indicators will help in alerting an individual of a potential vagrant pewee (Lee et al. 2008). The best manner for certainty of identification is vocalizations and excellent photographs showing the wing and tail.
ratio (Lee et al. 2008). For more information on identification, it highly recommended that keen observers read Bemis and Rising (1999) and Lee et al. (2008).

Eastern Wood-Pewee is generally distinguished from other “Empidonax” flycatchers by its larger size, dark face, weak eye-ring, and longer and more pointed wings, which extend at least halfway down the tail when perched (Phillips et al. 1966a, Pyle 1997). The species is distinguished from the Eastern Phoebe (Sayornis phoebe) by its smaller size, distinctive wing-bars, pale lower mandible, and lack of tail-wagging behaviour. The Eastern Wood-Pewee differs from the Olive-sided Flycatcher (Contopus borealis), by its smaller size, dusky (not dark) flanks, proportionately smaller head and bill, and by vocalizations (Altman and Sallabanks 2012).

Any records of the Eastern Wood-Pewee in British Columbia need to be photographed at length and hopefully from every angle. It is also imperative that any potential birds are heard vocalizing and whenever possible songs and call notes are recorded.

**Occurrence and Documentation**

The Eastern Wood-Pewee is an accidental vagrant to British Columbia with a well photographed and heard immature bird found by Rick Toochin, Paul and David Baker on private property in the Deroche area of the Upper Fraser Valley on September 3, 2018 (R. Toochin Pers. Comm.). The bird was found and photographed in the company of 3 Western Wood-Pewees, 2 adults and 1 immature (D. Baker Pers. Comm.). The Eastern Wood-Pewee responded to call playback and gave both call notes and sang back to recordings (P. Baker Pers. Comm.). When Western Wood-Pewee recordings were also played in the same area, this bird ignored them, but the 3 Western Wood-Pewees responded almost immediately (R. Toochin Pers. Comm.). The bird did not vocalize often and unfortunately despite attempts to secure recordings of the song, we were unsuccessful (R. Toochin Pers. Comm.). Fortunately all observers were able to obtain hundreds of photographs from every angle that clearly show the angled manner the bird sat, the bright buffy wingbars, the overall greenish colouration on the bird’s plumage, and the short primary extension to the overall tail length. This bird also sat constantly with its tail angled downward from the bird’s body and folded wings (D. Baker Pers. Comm.). This represents the first provincial record of this species for British Columbia.
Figure #1: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. This bird almost always sat with its tail pointed down away from its body and folded wings. Photo © Rick Toochin.
Figure #2: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. This bird almost always sat with its tail pointed down away from its body and folded wings. Photo © Rick Toochin.
Figure #3: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. This bird almost always sat with its tail pointed down away from its body and folded wings. Photo © Paul Baker.
Figure #4: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. This bird almost always sat with its tail pointed down away from its body and folded wings. Photo © Paul Baker.
Figure #5: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. The bird listened intently as the song and calls of the Eastern Wood-Pewee were played to it before responding.
Photo © Paul Baker.
Figure #6: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. This shot captured the bird responding to the song of the Eastern Wood-Pewee. Photo © Paul Baker.
Figure #7: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. This photo clearly shows the primary extension is shorter than the tail extension. Photo © Paul Baker.
Figure #7a: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. This photo clearly shows the primary extension is shorter than the tail extension. Photo © Paul Baker.
Figure #8: Record #1: Eastern Wood-Pewee in the Deroche Area on September 3, 2018. The tail in this photo is spread showing pointed tail feathers indicating a juvenile bird. Photo © Paul Baker.

**Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank Barbara McKee and Don Cecile for editing this manuscript. All photos are used with permission of the photographers and are fully protected by copyright law. Photographs are not to be reproduced, published or retransmitted on any website without the authorization of the photographers.

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