

APPENDIX III

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM *Consolidated under orig. accession #*

NEW STATE RECORD  UNUSUAL RECORD  *Accepted at: 6-1*

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Buff-breasted Flycatcher / Empidonax fulvifrons  
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)

Date(s): May 19, 1991

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: — Plumage: ADULT

Latilong: \_\_\_\_\_ Distribution Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Habitat Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Locality: Colorado Spring State Wildlife Area <sup>(Hanna Ranch)</sup> Elevation: —

Nearest town: Pueblo County: \_\_\_\_\_

Time(s) observed: 6:15 PM & 4 other times between 6:30-7:30 PM

Duration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): 15m / 2m / 12m / 14m / 14m

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers): Bill Pratter WELD Co. Rd Compton, Co. (776-2191)

John Pratter Same

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

No One else that I know of

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):

Cloudy to partly sunny conditions, decent lighting str

Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): 7x50 Binoculars

Distance and how measured: 25 feet - guess -

If photographed, type of equipment and film: \_\_\_\_\_

Who else photographed the bird: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

Typical Empidonax style but sat lower in understory than its

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field:

Continuation on flying behavior - This birds very short wings gave it a fluffy appearance when it did fly ground

Description (continued): Empidonax flycatcher bird A - Tabony -  
buff colored breast from the neck to a most of  
lower belly. - No yellow. Buff-colored underparts

a big white eye ring, a small bill that was colored yellow  
orange. Back color was not seen by me. TAIL WAS comparably short.  
Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery,  
(i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

I heard a 'wicky-wew' song only once before  
we ever saw this bird. Also call note was a  
very soft wit.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:  
Low bottomland forest along a creek  
cottonwood / willow Associations

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?  
Smaller size and short feathery wings, buff colored  
breast, large white eye-ring. Milky color, size and wings.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?  
I've never seen a Buff-breasted Flycatcher before and am  
very familiar with all typical western Empidonax.

List books, illustration, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

- a) At time of observation: Geographic Field Guide - 1983
- b) After observation: \_\_\_\_\_

This report was written from reports made during \_\_\_\_\_, after observation , from memory \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time report was written: MAY 20, 1991

Reporting observer: Jerry Cairo Signature: Jerry Cairo

Address: P.O. BOX 643 EATON, CO. 80615

All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:

Return to: CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS  
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
CITY PARK  
DENVER, CO 80205

SPECIES: Buff-Breasted Flycatcher *Empidonax fulvifrons*

LOCATION: Hanna Ranch state wildlife area, El Paso County, latilong 19

DATE: May 19, 1991

CONDITIONS: seen about 6pm, a thunderstorm was building over the mountains to the west, covering the sun so the light was very diffuse.

HABITAT: Willows and brushy shrubs up to about 6 feet tall.

BEHAVIOR: When first seen the bird was perched low in the brush. It moved to 2 other perches while I watched it. The flight was very fluttery but when perched it sat quietly moving mostly only its head. I heard 2 songs and numerous calls. The songs seemed to be 3 syllables and "chicky-whew" seemed a good description of what I heard. The calls were a soft whist similar to dusky flycatcher. I did not observe it catch any insects in the 15 minutes I watched it but small moths were very abundant and it may have been satiated. It sat on perches at distances as close as 10-15 feet for periods of several minutes allowing us to see nearly every detail.

DESCRIPTION: I identified the bird as an empidonax by the upright posture, the head being slightly peaked at the back, the obvious eye-ring which was pointed at the back, the shape and relative size of the bill, and the wingbars. A black-capped chickadee and a yellow warbler came quite close to the bird when it was perched so size could be compared. It was obviously smaller than the chickadee and very slightly smaller than the warbler. The obvious feature of the bird that really grabbed my attention was the rich, intense buffy color of the breast. The entire underparts I saw were buff although the throat was lighter and I really didn't see the lower belly and vent area as it always perched low. The upperparts as viewed from directly behind and a little above were mostly brownish with, I thought, a slight tinge of olive. The edges of the nape showed the buff color spilling over from the underparts. The wings when the bird was perched were brownish, a little darker than the back except for the wingbars and all the primary and secondary edges I could see which were light buffy, the buffy area on the first secondaries covering the outside half of the feather and extending from the lower wing bar to the tip. These 2 light buff patches were the most obvious feature of the bird when viewed from behind. The wingbars were obvious, being not quite white but much lighter than the rest on the wing coverts. The bill was short for an empidonax but relatively average width. The entire lower mandible was dull yellow, the upper mandible was uniformly dark. The primary extension was moderate to long for the small size of the bird.

DISCUSSION: The plumage of the bird appeared bright and fresh with none of the washed out and worn appearance that the guides mention for summer birds. A couple of references mentioned that 2nd year birds (being about 1 year old) retain more of the rich buff color. My guess it was a bird badly overshooting its range on its first migration north. John and Jerry observed the bird more times than I as I went to call other birders while they stayed. When I returned I never saw the bird perched again although it was moving low in the brush and calling. John first saw the bird and immediately called out the ID when I saw it an instant later I could understand why he was so certain-the bird looked like any other empidonax but was totally different in underpart color than any other empidonax I've seen.

OBSERVERS: John Prather, Jerry Cairo, and myself, Bill Prather. Mark Janos was present when it was calling and flitting through the brush at dusk but it never gave a good look to anyone then.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Bill Prather*

34-91-47

- SPECIES:** Buff-Breasted Flycatcher ( *Empidonax fulvifrons* )
- LOCATION:** Hannah Ranch State Wildlife Area
- DATE:** May 19, 1991
- CONDITIONS:** The bird was first observed about 6:30 P. M. The sky was mostly overcast and lighting was diffuse though still bright. A moderate wind ( 10 - 20 M. P. H. ) was blowing most of the time but was less strong in the wooded area where the bird was seen. I observed the bird with Bousch & Lomb 8X42 Elite binoculars for more than ten minutes at distances of less than 30 feet. I saw it several more times later that evening.
- HABITAT:** The area was fairly thickly vegetated to a height of 3 - 4 feet with small willow trees and low shrubs covering much of the area. A large number of dead logs were also lying on the ground. Cottonwood trees made up the majority of the canopy vegetation which covered perhaps 40% of the area. A small ditch with pools of water in the bottom ran through the middle of the willow grove.
- BEHAVIOR:** Most of the time the bird was observed it was sitting on dead branches and other exposed perches near ground level ( less than 3 feet off the ground ). During these times the bird sat very still, showing none of the characteristic wing and tail flicking which is so prevalent in other *Empidonax* species. The bird would sometimes move its head back and forth rapidly, as if searching for prey. When the bird flew it used short, quick wingbeats which gave the flight a fluttering appearance. The bird appeared to be feeding on small millers and other flying insects which were rising from the low vegetation, catching them on the wing in typical flycatcher fashion. The bird often gave a call note which was similar to the "whit" call of a Dusky Flycatcher but slightly quicker and louder. When first discovered the bird was singing a quick three note song, fitting the "chicky-whew" description in the field guides well.
- DISCRPTION:** The most obvious feature of this bird was the bright buff color of the underparts. This color was a deep orange-buff on the breast and sides, a lighter buff on the throat, flanks, and sides of the neck, and buffy-white on the belly and undertail coverts. The upperparts, including the crown, nape, back, and rump were a rich grey-brown and varied little in tone. The wing and tail feathers were a slightly darker shade of brown, and also of uniform hue. The bird showed two very prominent off-white wingbars and each of the flight feathers had a broad outer edge of the same color. The first secondary on each wing showed a particularly broad edge of buff-white which was very distinctive when the perched bird was viewed from behind. The bird also displayed a distinct white eye-ring which widened somewhat both in front of and behind the eye. The eye itself was dark. The bill of the bird appeared very short and the lower mandible was entirely pale yellow in coloration. This bird was slightly smaller than a Yellow Warbler which was also foraging in the area and approached to within

two feet of the flycatcher at one point. In general, compared with other species of Empidonax flycatchers with which I am familiar, this bird appeared small and very short tailed, and had shortish primary extension. I feel that this bird may have been a second year bird due to the relative brightness of the buff coloration on the underparts.

**CONCLUSION:**

There are a number of species which are about the size of this bird and have both eyerings and wingbars. These species include Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, several vireo species ( notably Hutton's and Bell's ), all of the other Empidonax flycatchers, and Northern Beardless Tyrannulet. Ruby-Crowned Kinglet is ruled out due to the buff underparts, brownish upperparts, and relative inactivity of this bird. The vireos are out because their plumage is gray and greenish-yellow and they feed by gleaning, not flycatching. The tyrannulet is a very plain gray bird which has buffy wingbars and an indistinct eyering. All other Empidonax flycatchers found in North America have upperparts of gray or greenish gray and underparts of white, gray, or yellow. The call note, short tail, and entirely pale lower mandible also help to eliminate several Empidonax species. I can think of no other bird found in North America which has a color pattern similar to the Buff-Breasted Flycatcher.

It should be noted that the Buff-Breasted Flycatcher is a fairly long distance migrant whose wintering range is directly south of Colorado. In the past it bred as far north as central Arizona and New Mexico and is mentioned by at least one source as being a species which is likely to be found north of it's current range. As this sighting followed several days of strong south winds, and is one of several sightings of southwestern species in Colorado this year ( i.e. Lucy's Warbler, Black Pheobe, Vermillion Flycatcher ) I feel it is likely that this bird and many others simply overshot their usual breeding areas.

**OBSERVERS:**

John Prather, Bill Prather, Jerry Cairo

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*John Prather*