

Willow Flycatcher

Empidonax traillii

General Information:

-This bird can be distinguished from other Empidonax flycatchers by its voice and breeding habitat preference, plus it is perhaps the most brown of the eastern Empidonax and lacks a prominent eye ring. Much variation occurs in overall color: northwestern races have dark heads, while southwestern races are very pale. The compact, intricate nests of these birds often have streamers hanging underneath. Formerly this species was lumped together with the Alder Flycatcher as the Traill's Flycatcher.

Song:

-Often silent in migration. Utters harsh, burry *fitz-bew* or *fritz-be-yew* resembling a sneeze with accent of the first syllable. Also calls a thick loud whit!

Behavior:

-Inhabits swamps and willow thickets along streams. Often perches low below crown of vegetation; when singing uses an exposed perch. Males chase females in courtship flights. Perches to spot prey, then catches it in flight. Eats a wide variety of flying insects and those gleaned from foliage; also take spider and some berries.



Breeding:

-Monogamous.

Nesting:

-Incubation 12-15 days by the female. The 1 brood per year of altricial young are fed by both sexes and have their first flight at 12-14 days

Population:

-Fairly common, but is facing a decline due to loss of streamside habitat.

Conservation:

-Neo-tropical migrant. Nest parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds. Populations increase with reduced cattle grazing in breeding habitats and cessation of killing and removing streamside willow thickets.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

-If you would like to create an environment friendly to the Willow Flycatcher on your shoreland property plant at least a 10 feet wide swathe of the majority of your buffer zone directly on the shoreline with Weeping Willow, Black Willow, Pussy Willow, and Sandbar Willow. The planting of emergent and submersed aquatic vegetation is also encouraged.