

Peter John

Species: Eastern Wood Pewee Number: 1
Location: Credit Island Park, Davenport, Scott County, Iowa
Date: Oct. 23, 1983 Time: apr. 10:10-10:20 AM

Description: The bird was a moderate sized flycatcher, a little larger than the Yellow-rumped Warblers that were in the same tree. The head and back were uniformly olive-brown; the bird lacked a visible eye ring. The wings were darker, almost black, with two buffy-white wing bars. The tail was uniformly black (the same color as the wings). While the sides of the breast were distinctly grayish, the remainder of the underparts (throat, center of the breast and belly) were white. The bill had a dark upper mandible and a pinkish base to the lower mandible.

Description of voice: The bird repeatedly uttered its call note, a single "pip" that did not have any buzzy or harsh character. The call note was somewhat similar to the note of a Yellow-rumped Warbler but not nearly as loud or harsh.

Behavior: The bird was actively foraging in several oak trees, generally remaining 20-30 feet above the ground. At no time was it observed to wag its tail.

Habitat: Open parkland; a grove of large oak trees and fairly short grass

Elimination of similar species: Eastern Phoebe was eliminated by the pink lower mandible, absence of yellow on the underparts and absence of tail wagging behavior; phoebes also have grayer upperparts and have a different "jizz", appearing larger with a relatively larger head than a pewee.

Western Wood Pewee was eliminated by the call note. The Western Wood Pewee has a single or double call note that has a distinctly buzzy character.

Distance: as close as 30 feet (estimated)

Optical Equipment: 7 X 42 binoculars

Light Conditions: the sky was overcast and the lighting generally was not good; however, I was able to clearly observe the previously noted characteristics of this bird.

Previous Experience: I have previously observed hundreds of phoebes and Eastern Wood Pewees and am very familiar with the call notes of both species. I have observed and heard Western Wood Pewees during 3 prior trips to the western U.S., most recently this past July in Arizona where I repeatedly heard its song and call notes.

Other Observers: Pete Petersen, Carl Bendorf, John Robinson and 12+ additional members of the IOU; they agreed with the identification although most of these observers lacked the experience to separate the two wood pewees based on call notes.

Books, ... consulted: After the bird was identified, Carl played tape recordings of both pewees from the new National Geographic field guide series. This tape did not have the call note of the Eastern Wood Pewee but did have the call note of the Western Wood Pewee which was noted to be quite different from the call note given by this bird.

The field notes for this observation were written approximately 2.5 hours after the bird was observed. This description was typed from the field notes 2 days later.

Bruce Peterjohn

Bruce Peterjohn
105-K E. Ticonderoga Dr.
Westerville, OH 43081
Oct. 25, 1983