

# THE NAME OF LAWRENCE'S FLYCATCHER

RICHARD C. BANKS<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** – If Lawrence's Flycatcher of Grenada, Trinidad, and northern South America is placed in the genus *Lathrotriccus* with the species *euleri*, it should be *L. flaviventris* (Lawrence) or *L. euleri flaviventris*, depending on rank. If it remains in the genus *Empidonax*, the specific name should be *bolivianus* Allen.

G. N. Lawrence (*in* Wells 1886 [=1887]) named a bird from the Lesser Antillean island of Grenada *Blacicus flaviventris*. The species was based on a single immature specimen, now in the U.S. National Museum, in poor (mutilated) condition. *Blacicus* Cabanis (type species *Muscipeta caribaea* d'Orbigny) was the generic name then used for the West Indian wood-pewees now placed in the genus *Contopus*. The species was maintained in *Blacicus* by Ridgway (1907). Later in 1887, Lawrence (1887) named *Octhoeca flaviventris* based on a single specimen from an unknown locality in South America. Cory and Hellmayr (1927) suggested Trinidad as the restricted type locality, but included much of northern South America in its range. *Octhoeca* (type species *Fluvicola oenanthoides* Lafresnaye and d'Orbigny) is a widespread genus of South American tyrant flycatchers.

Allen (1889a) named *Empidonax bolivianus* from a single specimen from an unknown locality in Bolivia. Allen (1889b) also reexamined Lawrence's type of *Octhoeca flaviventris* and concluded that it should be transferred to the genus *Empidonax*. The specific name *flaviventris* was preoccupied in *Empidonax* by *Tyrannula flaviventris* of Baird and Baird (1843), which had been transferred into *Empidonax* previously, so Allen renamed Lawrence's *flaviventris*, *Empidonax lawrencei*. Ridgway (1907) maintained both *bolivianus* and *lawrencei* as extralimital species of *Empidonax*. Cory and Hellmayr (1927) suggested that the type of *bolivianus* was an example of *Empidonax traillii brewsteri*.

Barbour (1911) named *Empidonax johnstonei* from a single specimen from Grenada. He considered it to be derived from *Empidonax lawrencei* of Trinidad, from which it had "become differentiated in isolation to a considerable extent." Cory and Hellmayr (1927) considered *johnstonei* as a subspecies of *lawrencei*. They considered Barbour's *johnstonei* the same as Lawrence's *Blacicus flaviventris*, with *flaviventris* preoccupied in the genus *Empidonax*. Bond (1936) also considered *lawrencei* and *johnstonei* conspecific. He noted that only two specimens of *johnstonei* were known, and suggested that it was merely a straggler on Grenada.

Zimmer (1939) considered the type of *bolivianus* to belong to the group of birds "formerly all included under the name *lawrencei*." He recognized two subspecies in that group, *bolivianus* in Peru and Ecuador and (although not treated in that paper) *lawrencei* in Trinidad and Venezuela. However, he treated *bolivianus* and, by extension, *lawrencei* as subspecies of *Empidonax euleri* of southern South America. No reason was given for this merger, but Zimmer (1939) noted that the immature plumage of *bolivianus* was "not always distinguishable [in color characters] with perfect assurance from that of *euleri* or [*e.*] *argentinus* . . . ." Bond (1940) followed in treating *lawrencei* as a subspecies of *euleri*, and synonymized *johnstonei* with it.

Griscom and Greenway (1941) separated *bolivianus* from *euleri* and treated it as a subspecies of *lawrencei*. Pinto (1944) followed this treatment as Brown (1986) and French (1991).

Meyer de Schauensee (1966) quoted a communication from E. Eisenmann on "the rather involved nomenclature of this species," as follows: "Treatment of the *E. lawrencei*



complex as a species presents a nomenclatural question, for the little known name *bolivianus* bears the same date, has the same authorship, and appeared in the same paper, with page priority. Under the Code the selection of the specific name depends on the first reviser and Pinto in using *E. lawrencei bolivianus* may be regarded as having selected *lawrencei*; if not, this comment may be treated as selection of *E. lawrencei* as the name for the species by those who regard it as distinct from *E. euleri*. “

This historical review of the nomenclature of the group shows that Eisenmann (in Meyer de Schauensee 1966) erred in several respects. The names *bolivianus* and *lawrencei* appeared in separate papers by Allen in 1889. *Epidonax bolivianus* appeared in March, and *E. lawrencei* was proposed in June. There is no problem of priority, and no first reviser is needed. At any rate, Griscom and Greenway (1941) were the first to use the combination *Epidonax lawrencei bolivianus* rather than Pinto (1944). Lawrence's Flycatcher should bear the specific name *bolivianus* if the species is placed in the genus *Empidonax* and kept separate from *euleri*.

Zink and Johnson (1984) showed on the basis of an electrophoretic study that the species *euleri* should be removed from the genus *Empidonax*. This was supported by syringeal and additional biochemical evidence by Lanyon and Lanyon (1986), who established the genus *Lathrotriccus* with the type species *Empidochanes euleri* Cabanis. The Lanyons did “not address the considerable problems of intraspecific relationships within *euleri* (see Meyer de Schauensee 1966 [actually Eisenmann as quoted above]).” The “*lawrencei*” complex was apparently included in the concept of *Lathrotriccus euleri*.

The A.O.U. (1987) accepted the genus *Lathrotriccus* for the species *euleri*, which is in the list of North American birds by virtue of the occurrence on Grenada of the form *johnstonei* (see Traylor 1979). The A.O.U. (1983) included a note under its listing of *Empidonax euleri* that “the northern forms, including that on Grenada, are sometimes recognized as a distinct species, *E. lawrencei* Allen, 1889 [Lawrence's Flycatcher].” With the recognition of *Lathrotriccus*, the A.O.U. (1987) wrote that there should be a change in the note from “*E. lawrencei* Allen” to “*L. lawrencei* (Allen).”

However, Lawrence's Flycatcher bears the name *lawrencei* because it was in the genus *Empidonax*, where its original name *flaviventris* was preoccupied by *Empidonax flaviventris* (Baird and Baird, 1843). When moved to *Lathrotriccus*, *flaviventris* is not preoccupied and becomes the correct specific name for Lawrence's Flycatcher if it is recognized as a species distinct from *L. euleri*. Moreover, the earliest name in the group is *Blacicus flaviventris*, based on a bird from Grenada, where the species is perhaps only a vagrant or extinct (Bond 1978). Assuming that the three records from Grenada (Bond 1956) are vagrants from Trinidad, they must be of the same subspecies as the Trinidad population. Thus, *Octhoeca flaviventris* Lawrence, 1887, *Empidonax lawrencei* Allen, 1889, and *Empidonax johnstonei* Barbour, 1911 are all objective junior synonyms of *Lathrotriccus flaviventris* (Lawrence, 1886 = [February] 1887), type locality Hampden, St. Andrews, Grenada. *Empidonax bolivianus* Allen, 1889 would become *L. f. bolivianus* if treated as a distinct subspecies.

However, if Lawrence's Flycatcher is maintained as a part of the species *L. euleri*, it is necessary only to change the note in A.O.U. (1983, 1987) to read “*L. flaviventris* (Lawrence)” rather than either “*E. lawrencei* Allen” or “*L. lawrencei* (Allen).”

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<sup>1</sup>National Biological Service, National Museum of Natural History, MRC 111, Washington, DC 20560.