

SPRING EMPIDONAX FLYCATCHER PROJECT

By Ralph K. Bell

Here is a tip that some banders might like to try this spring with empidonax flycatchers (where identity is uncertain). If the day is bright and sunny and birds are singing everywhere -- try putting single flycatchers in a cage for perhaps an hour or two (outdoors) to see if they will sing. If they do sing, there will be no question of identity.

I have had both the Traill's and the Acadian Flycatcher give their call notes from cages. I much prefer to put them in the Seth Low All-purpose Trap where they can fly from perch to perch, drink water, or even catch flies.

However, I once had a Traill's give his "whit-chu" call many, many times from a single cell cage in our car with the radio going full blast (perhaps some musical notes gave him the idea to sing.)

After putting the flycatcher into the all-purpose trap, leave for a time, and then slip back quietly and listen from a distance. Take measurements and keep a file on all birds heard singing for future reference.

In the spring, in this area, most Traill's seem to have a darker head than the back, but I cannot always depend on this. The Yellow-bellied is not such a problem. Neither is the Least, as it has a look all of its own (to me) and of course is smaller.

An excellent reference to help identify eastern empidonax flycatchers in the fall was published in August 1959 by Chan Robbins.

