





Hammond's Flycatcher

Monocacy Nature Center
Bethlehem, PA

December 2, 2000
3:30 PM

photo by: [Bob Brown](#)

Monocacy Birds

Hammond's Flycatcher Photos

(Courtesy of Rick Wiltraut)



①

Dave De Reamus:

"shows gray head
olive back contrast"





②

Dave DeReamus:

"shows a wing stretch"

③



Dave De Reamus;
"shows yellowish wash
and dark bill"



(4)

"shows long primary
projection and
large tail"

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HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax hammondi*):

Monocacy Nature Center

December 1, 2000

35 degrees F, partly sunny

Habitat: Grassy hill, edged with trees. (Hill included a couple of small shrubby islands). The sun was shining on the hill.

Found the bird at 8:45am in a small shrub near the top left edge of the hill. Remaining in the edges, it worked it's way down the hill a bit, spent a little time in one of the nearby shrubby islands, then moved back over to the edges of the woods and slowly continued to work it's way down the hill. It was being observed by a dozen or so people.

Gray head
Olive back
Gray neck
Olive/gray above eyes (huge bushy area)
Gray crown
Buffy tertial edges
Wingbars, buffy (upper wingbar small, lower wingbar large)
Sloped head, bushy peak
Large white eyering, somewhat teardrop shaped
Chest, gray wash
Flanks, yellow gray
Lower to Mid-belly, white (gray wash on sides, like open vest)
Forked tail

I noted lots of tail flicking and wing flicking. The bird stayed primarily along the edges, low to ground, and often flew out to the grass then back.

After reading back over my field notes, I noticed that I failed to record anything about the bill. I recall it being small, thin and dark.

It's primary projections were long, but I remember thinking they weren't quite as long as portrayed in the field guide drawings.

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Hammond's Flycatcher*Empidonax hammondi*

Monocacy Nature Preserve

2 December 2001

Mark A. McConaughy

I visited the Monocacy Nature Preserve in Northampton County, Pennsylvania on 2 December 2001. It was a sunny, cool day and the bird was viewed moving around eating insects and possibly a berry along a brushy edge for over an hour and a half. The bird was photographed with a 500 mm mirror reflex lens on a Nikon 6006 body using Kodachrome 200. The slides were then scanned and enlarged into a computer for copies that I am submitting to you. Unfortunately, the scanning process increases the contrast and shifts colors a little. I will send the original slides if you really need or request to see them. However, I really want to keep the slides for my own use and hope other, better photos (some of which were posted on the Internet) are submitted to you. Also, although the scanned shots are numbered hamfc10 to hamfc17, these are the same as shots I scanned as hamfc1 to hamfc8. The only difference is the former were enlarged about 2x so the bird shows up better.

The bird in question clearly was an *Empidonax* flycatcher. It was fairly small, about the size of a Black-capped Chickadee, generally greenish in color (specifics for different body sections follow), had a pair of notable wing bars and flitted around the shrubbery chasing insects.

The head was relatively large compared to its overall size. The beak was very short, about the size of the combined eye and eye ring width (see hamfc15.jpg), and dark gray or black. It did not display any pinkish-orange color at the base of the lower mandible like a Dusky or Gray Flycatcher would show. The lower mandible of this bird was dark gray/black, which is unlike the pale lower mandible of a Least Flycatcher and generally for the other *Empidonax* flycatchers (see hamfc15.jpg, hamfc16.jpg and hamfc17.jpg which provide good profiles of the head and dark upper and lower mandibles). The bills for the other *Empidonax* flycatchers also all seem to be longer than the combined width of the eye and eye rings of those species. The head itself was gray and had a slight, but noticeable, crest toward the rear of the head. The eye was black and had a noticeable eye ring that was larger or elongated on the rear side of the eye (see hamfc15.jpg and hamfc16.jpg). The area below the beak, i.e., the throat region, was a much lighter gray than the head (and due to the bright sunlight and increased contrast in scanning the slides, some jpegs show it as white -- it really wasn't that bright a white "live" -- the best of the scanned shots are hamfc16.jpg and hamfc17.jpg at showing a lighter gray throat). The gray throat sets the bird apart from Least Flycatchers.

The olive-gray colored back of the bird contrasted gray of the head (hamfc16.jpg is best example of this). The breast of the bird was grayish and the belly had a noticeable yellowish tinge (hamfc16.jpg and hamfc17.jpg are best examples). The wings were dark gray/black with two wing bars. The primaries extended well past the undertail coverts. This is evident to some extent in hamfc17.jpg and hamfc15.jpg. The primaries of Dusky Flycatchers do not appear to extend much past the undertail coverts, if at all.

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The tail was a dark gray and did not appear to be overly long given the size of the bird. Dusty Flycatchers have a longer-tailed look to them. The outer tail feathers did appear to be lighter than the other tail feathers, and this shows up in hamfc16.jpg and hamfc17.jpg. I did not see a notched tail, but the tail was rather worn/battered. The bird also did not present the tail to me at an angle that really let me see if it was notched.

The bill, throat and primary wing extension all indicate this bird was a Hammond's Flycatcher and not a Dusty Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher (the two most likely to be confused with it) or any other empid. I consider it to be a Hammond's Flycatcher.

SIGHT RECORD REPORT FORM

1. Basic data

Species, English name: Hammond's Flycatcher.

Scientific name: *Empidonax hammondii*.

Number of birds: one.

Sex: unknown.

Age: unknown.

Place: Monocacy Nature Preserve.

Nearest town: Bethlehem.

County: Northampton.

Date(s) of your observations: 3 December 2000.

Time: about a half hour, beginning around 1:20 PM.

Earlier/later dates by others, if known: See below.

First and last dates, if known: 18 November to 22 December 2000.

2. Observer data

Observer: Jennifer Hanson.

Address: 13 Vincent Pl., Montclair, NJ 07042.

Telephone: home: 973/746-4482, work: 212/698-7588.

E-Mail: ammodramus@hotmail.com.

Other observers: Leif Austad, Arlene Oley, many others not known to me.

Who found it? Joe Zajacek (*fide* PABIRDS).

Who first identified it? Not known.

Who also is reporting it, if known? Not known.

3. Observation details

Was it photographed? Not by me. **Videotaped?** Not by me. **Sound recording made?** Not by me.

Optical equipment used: Swift Audubon 8.5 x 44 binoculars, Swarovski ST 80 HD scope with a 20-60 power zoom.

Camera/other equipment used: None.

Distance from bird: about 50 yards.

Weather and light conditions: The weather was sunny and cold (20s or 30s). At the time of the observation, the light came from behind us as we watched the bird, so that the lighting was generally very good.

Are photographs and/or recordings included with this report?
No.

If not, are they accessible to the Committee? How? Not known.

4. Experience

Indicate your prior experience with this and similar species. I have seen and heard Hammond's Flycatcher once before, in western Oregon in 1996. I have a good amount of experience with the eastern Empids, mostly with Least (*E. minimus*), Willow (*E. traillii*) and Acadian (*E. virescens*) flycatchers. I've also seen Alder (*E. alnorum*) and Yellow-

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18. The eighteenth part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been named in the proceedings.

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bellied (*E. flaviventris*) flycatchers. I also have extensive experience with Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) and Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*), and am familiar with Olive-sided Flycatcher (*C. cooperi*).

What books, illustrations, and advice did you consult? *Birding in the American West* by Kevin J. Zimmer; *A Field Guide to Advanced Birding* by Kenn Kaufman; *The Sibley Guide to Birds* by David Allen Sibley.

How long have you been birding? Twelve years as of September 2000.

Was this report written from notes made during or after the observation, or from memory? From notes written during the observation; a copy of the notes and field sketch is attached.

5. Description: Using as many additional pages as needed, give complete details of this observation. Include information on the bird's plumage, shape and size, vocalizations, habitat, behavior, etc. Describe what you actually saw, and include photocopies of your original notes and sketches.

The flycatcher was fairly active, but also spent time perching. It hawked after flying insects, but also spent time on the ground, apparently foraging there as well. The bird flew back and forth between several islands of shrubbery and trees in the field, as if it was patrolling a beat. Even when it was lost to sight, one only had to wait in order for it to reappear eventually. It caught a large green insect of some type and spent a lot of time attempting to swallow it; eventually, it either dropped the insect or flew to the ground with it. Periodically, it flicked its wings. All in all, the bird appeared to be in good health. Unfortunately, I did not hear it call.

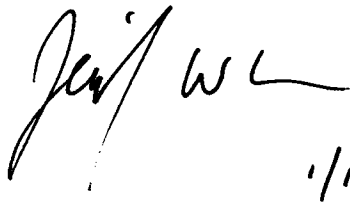
It was a small flycatcher with a short thin bill. The bill was black with a paler area at the base of the lower mandible, and perhaps extending along the cutting edge. There was a noticeable eyering, perhaps wider in back than in front, but it was fairly wide in front as well. The eyering was narrowest above and below the eye. The chin was light. The bird had a "vested" look, with brownish on the upper breast; this tint was lightest in the center of the breast. Below the "vest" the belly had a distinct yellowish wash. The bird had two wingbars and very striking whitish edges to the wing feathers, especially the tertials. The folded wingtips extended a bit beyond the place where the base of tail met the body. The tail was notched.

Name the species you consider ID contenders; explain how you eliminated each.

Although somewhat kinglet-like (*Regulus* sp.), this bird was clearly not a kinglet as it was not small and round enough in shape; a kinglet would be even more active, as well. The two white wingbars and eyering steer one toward the genus *Empidonax*.

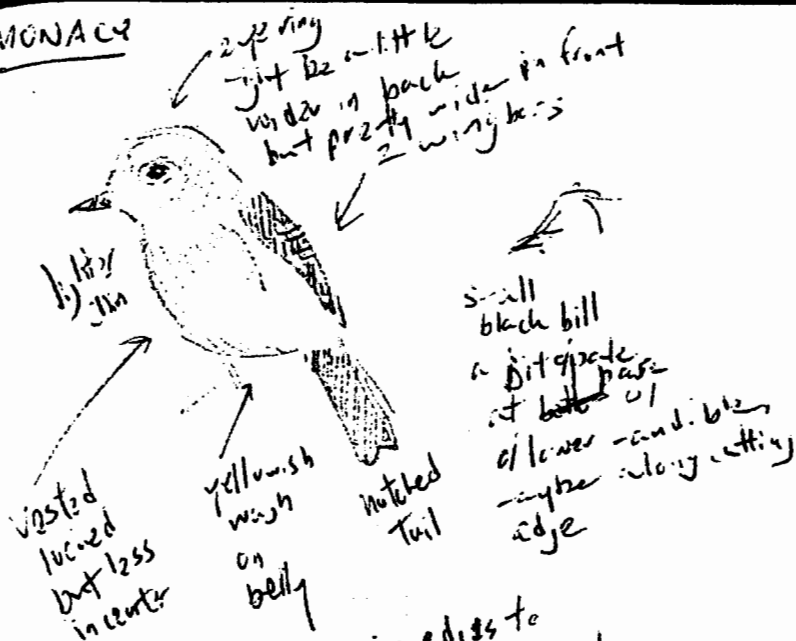
Even though the call note was not heard, a combination of factors points toward this bird's being a Hammond's Flycatcher. The tiny slender bill which is mostly black is a good mark for Hammond's or Dusky (*E. oberholseri*) Flycatchers; Least has a similar overall build but should have more pale on the bill and its bill is not as proportionately small. The fresh state of the bird's feathers indicates that the bird had recently molted; both Dusky and Least Flycatchers do not molt until they reach the wintering grounds and therefore should look more worn in late fall. The longer wing extension, with wings extending beyond the place where tail and body meet, is another mark in favor of Hammond's and against Dusky and Least. The "vested" look is yet another mark that indicates the bird is a Hammond's. The active wing-flicking is a behavioral trait of Hammond's Flycatcher, which tends to be more "twitchy" than the other two species. All in all, though it would have been preferable to hear the call note for definitive identification, this bird appears to be a typical fresh fall Hammond's Flycatcher.

Signature:


1/18/01

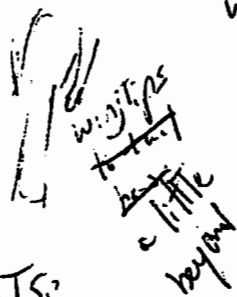
"BUTTER"

MONARCH



bill
to dark

very striking edges to
wing feathers; esp. tentacles



WTS?
HcFi
WBN
BCC

HAMMOND'S
FLY CATCHER



e body
finely
neck &
all head

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Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondi*
Monocacy Nature Center, Bethlehem PA. Northampton Co. Dec. 2, 2000

Duration of observation, lighting conditions and optics: I was with the bird for about an hour maybe 10:45 – 11:45. The bird was moving around constantly so accounting for time spent relocating the bird and getting it back in view I probably spent 30-40 minutes looking at the bird with my scope or binoculars. Optics used were Leica 8x32 binoculars and a Leica 80 mm APO televid scope with a 32x objective lens. The sky was essentially clear and sun was overhead and at my back when looking at the bird. The bird was observed at ranges as close as 15 feet or less.

Bill: Upper mandible all black. Lower mandible yellow orange at base with dusky gray tip that was not distinctly demarcated. Perhaps outer 1/4 or more of bill dusky. Color of lower mandible brightest at base. Bill was short and broad at base appearing somewhat spade-shaped when viewed from above (when bird looked down at the ground while facing me). In profile the shape of the bill appeared short and thin with a narrow even taper from base to tip.

Head: Head was slightly crested giving it a triangular shape with the peak at the back of the crown. The bird raised the crown feather several times during the observation accentuating the crested appearance. Central crown gray. Lateral crown feathers tinged greenish/olive but only noticeable at certain angles when bird perched in the open. Supercillium gray. Face and auriculars gray. Lores slightly paler gray than face. Malar gray and throat whitish-gray and paler than face. Tone of gray paled gradually from darkest on auriculars to palest on center of throat with no sharp demarcation between throat, malar and face. Rear crown and nape gray. The eyering was obvious, off-white and expanded behind the eye

Upperparts: Greenish olive on dorsum from back to rump. The gray nape and greenish/olive back contrasted distinctly, especially when the bird perched in the open.

Underparts: Breast pale gray/white in center becoming a darker, dusky gray towards sides. Center of breast slightly darker than throat. Lower breast and belly pale yellow with color brightest on belly. Vent pale grayish yellow.

Wings: Primaries dark gray with brownish cast in direct light. Secondaries gray with pale whitish edges. Tertiaries gray with pale whitish-gray edges not as bright as secondaries. The pale edge on the innermost tertial was broadest. Upperwing coverts were gray with broad pale edges forming wingbars. Two wingbars, with at least the upper bar slightly tinged with buff, but the wing bars could appear pale gray/white at certain angles when not directly lit. The most frequent pattern of the wing morphology I could observe, while the bird was perched; was two primary tips clustered at the tip of the wing, a space, then 3 or 4 primary tips visible past the secondaries with the tips of each of those close together and evenly spaced. The tip of the last visible primary, the primary closest to the secondaries, was just barely visible and could be covered by the secondaries depending on the precise position of the wing. I interpreted these observations as meaning that the longest primary on the folded wing was P9. P8 was nearly the same length as P9 and could fold over that feather. P10 was not visible on the folded wing and so must have been shorter than P9 & 8. The next longest

visible primary was P7 which was a little closer in length to P8 than to P6. P6 was only slightly longer than P5 which was only slightly longer than p4 which was the last primary visible beyond the secondaries. The tip of P3 was even with the secondaries and only visible when the secondaries were displaced momentarily.

Tail: Rectrices were dark gray. Uppertail coverts were similar in tone and color to back, perhaps slightly browner. Undertail coverts pale grayish-yellow. Outer-most rectrices were the longest creating a distinct notch in the center of the closed tail.

Legs: Black.

Overall size, shape, and structure: The first impression this bird gave was of a large-headed, small billed empid with a jizz reminiscent of a Least. The bird appeared long-winged and short tailed. The wingtip extended beyond the uppertail coverts when viewed from the rear and slightly beyond, or even with, the ends of the undertail coverts when viewed in profile. The wings were often held slightly drooped with the wingtips below the tail and the rump exposed. The plumage appeared very fresh with no abrasion visible on the tertials or wing coverts.

Behavior: For the duration of the observation the bird was on the edge of an isolated group of trees in a sloping mowed field or on the edge of the adjacent patch of mixed deciduous woods. The bird appeared to be foraging and caught several invertebrates usually from the grass at the edge of the vegetation. The bird stayed in the lower half of the vegetation and often perched within a foot of the ground. The bird allowed fairly close approach by people with some photographers getting w/in 10 feet before the birds fled. The bird would occasionally rapidly open the wings very slightly, giving a single flick of the wings. The wing motion was accompanied by a slight rise of the tail, back and up. These motion were done intermittently and in no observable pattern. Occasionally the bird would open the bill wide exposing the bright yellow-orange lining of the mouth. This would be accompanied with a quick headshake or a quick retraction and extension of the head and neck. I believe this was an attempt to cast a pellet or eject exoskeletal material from the crop but I did not see anything come out of the mouth.

Vocalizations: None heard.

Seperation from other species: The very distinct contrast between the gray nape and greenish back is lacking in all eastern species of Empidonax in all plumages. Also all Eastern empids have noticeably larger, broader bills which generally lack the dusky tip on the lower mandible except for Least which can show a dusky tip but has a larger, broader based bill and is shorter winged. The "western" group of Empids (Cordilleran and Pacific-slope) also have broader bills, are more uniformly yellow-green overall, are shorter wing-winged, and have all pale lower mandibles. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is more uniformly olive colored dorsally and generally yellower on the breast and belly. The yellow tones on Yellow-bellied extend onto the throat and head. Yellow-bellied also have larger, broader bills. Gray Flycatcher has a noticeably longer bill, is less colorful and can show very distinct pale edges to the outer rectrices. I think that the only other possible species is Dusky Flycatcher *Empidonax oberholseri* a species I lack field experience with. According to Pyle there are measurements of the wing morphology (P9 - P5) and wing minus tail lengths that are

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diagnostic for Hammond vs. Dusky. Of course those measurements were not taken on this individual but the patterns I observed seem closer to the description in Pyle of the wing morphology of Hammonds than Dusky. After comparing specimens at ANSP it seems that the difference in lengths between P5 and P9 (the longest primary) could eliminate Dusky on this individual but without the actual measurement it is impossible to be certain that this is true. In side by side comparisons of specimens Hammond's Flycatcher appears shorter tailed and longer-winged. Unfortunately ANSP has only 3 specimens of Dusky versus 40 of Hammond's so it is impossible to be sure that the full range of variation in Dusky is represented in that collection. In the 6 individual represented by the 20 photos of Dusky Flycatcher in VIREO's collection Dusky Flycatcher also appears longer tailed and shorter winged than Hammond's. Based on specimens and Photos at ANSP it appears that Dusky has a consistently rounder wing morphology with P10,9, and 8 shortened and P7,6, and 5 lengthened but the overall pattern is similar and the differences so small that field based observation on this character are not conclusive. The freshness of the bird's plumage indicates that it had completed the pre-basic molt and was in Basic plumage. The buff tinge to the wing bars and the brown cast to the primaries suggests that this bird was in Basic 1 plumage and not in definitive basic plumage. There was no obvious wear on the plumage and no molt limits were observed. The Dusky Flycatcher account (No. 78 in "The Birds of North America") states "At least into Dec., hatching year birds may be distinguished from AHY (after hatching year) birds by a patchy body plumage consisting of a mix of fresh feathers scattered among worn, weaker-barbed Juvenal feathers." (p. 15) This bird showed no such mix of feather and so if it was in basic 1 plumage than it was most likely a Hammond's based on the uniformly fresh condition of the plumage.

This description was written on December 4, 2000 and based on notes taken during the observation on December 2. References consulted after the observation are NGS 3rd edition. The Sibley Guide, Pyle's Handbook to the Identification of North American Birds, Howell and Webb's Birds of Mexico and the Dusky (No. 78) and Hammond's (No. 109) Flycatcher accounts in "The Birds of North America"



Matt Sharp

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Hammond's Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*)

Date of Sighting: 18 November 2000 to 21 December 2000

Location: MONOCACY NATURE PRESERVE

County: NORTHAMPTON

Observer(s): Rick Wiltraut, Matt Sharp, Devich Farbotnik, Mark McCoanughy
Pat Sabold, Jennifer Hanson

Date of Submission: 2000

Submitted by: Rick Wiltraut, Matt Sharp, Devich Farbotnik, Mark McCoanughy
Pat Sabold, Jennifer Hanson

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

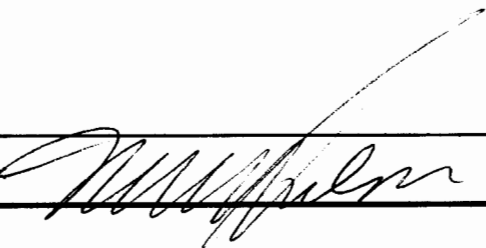
Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Couchman	X							
P. Hess	X							
R. Leck J. Stanley	X							
B. Reid	X							
R. Leck P. Rodewald		X						
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	4	1						
DECISION	X							

Comments:

7/0/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

10/27/01





































