

536-01-1969



**Hawk Mountain  
Sanctuary Association**  
1700 Hawk Mountain Road  
Kempton, PA 19529-9449

Phone: 610•756•6961  
Fax: 610•756•4468

6 March 1997

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Bill Uhrich, Louis Bevier, Dan Brauning, Frank Haas, Ned Johnson

**FR:** Laurie Goodrich

**RE:** Dusky Flycatcher Record

Because there has been a surge of interest in the Dusky Flycatcher record from Hawk Mountain, and in the fate of the specimen, I have been conducting some sleuthing in and around Hawk Mountain. I am sending each of you copies of the documentation I have in my files on the specimen. And, I enclose in this letter, the results of my sleuthing to-date.

I have spoken to Fred Wetzel, Hawk Mountain's assistant curator at the time of the bird's arrival at Hawk Mountain. Some of what I describe comes from him and most from Hawk Mt. notes (see enclosed). I have also spoken with Richard Sharadin, who was the person who brought the bird from Kutztown to Hawk Mountain and was serving on Hawk Mountain staff at the time. I am also intending to speak with Seth Benz who worked at Hawk Mt. from 1975 through 1984 when I arrived. Jim Brett, Phil Haas, and Cathy Viverette, all former staff from post-1970, all have no recollection of this bird or its specimen. Alex Nagy, curator at the time, has passed away.

The story as I know it is: The bird was found by Mr. Edwin Bieber on the seat of his truck inside his shed on Christmas day, 1969 in Kutztown, PA (near Kutz's Bridge, RD 3). He gave the dead bird to Richard Sharadin, his son-in-law at the time. Richard says it was in great shape and clearly only recently had died. Hawk Mountain journals report heavy snowfall for the period leading up to the encounter. Notes from Alex Nagy are attached. The bird was originally suspected to be a yellow-bellied flycatcher. Nagy phoned Earl Poole, who suggested he call Chan Robbins for information on status in east (Chan's letter is attached). A skin was prepared by Fred Wetzel and he examined the crop, stomach, etc and found no evidence of it having fed soon. The specimen was then sent to Dr. Johnson at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology for identification. In fall of 1970, Dr. Johnson wrote back with the determination that the specimen was an immature female (probable female). The specimen, according to Johnson's note, was mailed back to the Sanctuary in the week following. Fred remembers that the specimen was placed in the Hawk Mountain collection. Richard Sharadin has a vague recollection that the



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specimen was sent to the State Museum in Harrisburg, because Donald Heintzelmen was working there at the time, and he had been a Hawk Mt. close friend at the time. Richard says the staff here were not sure where to put the specimen. (Seth Benz may shed some light on this part of the question..stay tuned). In early 1990s, the Sanctuary renovated its basement room and had to get rid of some of the songbird specimens stored there. Most of the birds, I recall, were old warbler specimens, possibly prepared by Fran Trembley. I do not remember a flycatcher but I did not spend much time with these specimens. I think that Jim Brett and Cathy Viverette were the ones that took the specimens somewhere, and my recollection albeit vague, was that they were taken to the Academy of Sciences in Philadelphia. In the last few days, I have thoroughly checked all Hawk Mt. specimens in Visitor Center and Common Room and we do not have a flycatcher of any kind. It is my guess that if we took specimens anywhere in 1990, we would have taken them to the Academy, the American Museum in NYC or maybe the Carnegie (unlikely). The Academy is most likely as we sent birds there regularly.

If you want to talk with either Fred Wetzel or Richard Sharadin, their phone numbers are:  
Richard: 610-683-6686; Fred Wetzel: 756-4325.

I would be interested in any other information that develops on the location of the specimen, so I can update our own records. I will let you know if Seth Benz has any recollection to share. I will also contact Don Heintzelmen.

Maybe someone should write a mystery novel on this one!

Sincerely,

Laurie Goodrich  
Senior Naturalist

cc: file

23 December  
Tuesday

Viz: 0 Temp. 10° - 29°

1969 HMS LOG  
Cloudy w. th. intermittent sunshine

A winter wonderland. No traffic on the  
took 4x4 Truck to Schlemmer 8:00 a.m. for work on  
the snowplow hydraulic lift. Blade does not  
drop. They till nearly none. Trucks, cars  
spawbed all over the highways!!

Beats off.  
Fred off.

Dick - snowbound.

6:30 a.m.  
Dug out the H.M. feeders from under 16" of snowfall. The birds were  
all waiting and as soon as the snow was removed they immediately  
descended on the feed.

Starlings from in boxes. Fairly well gasified with waffles, however they  
cannot resist the peanut butter!! which they clean out in a few minutes.

Snowplow went thru in p.m. also calcium chloride applied.

24<sup>th</sup> Wednesday

Viz: 0 Temp. 12° - 24°

15" Snowfall  
Sunny, clear. Snowed during the night.

Common Room Apt. furnace inoperative: last night 5:00 p.m. checked Fred & Barb off.

apartment and found it down to 45°. The thermostat was pushed up Barb snowbound since  
and no action. checked furnace and the furnace relay had short Monday.

I reset and it started. However, there was a clicking action in the  
transformer, called the service man (10:00) and he came in the evening  
however set could not repair it because of the old transformer (which were  
very weak.) So we opened the hallway doors and let the heat from  
the ship rise thru the garage and upstairs.

The servicemen returned today and completed the job.

25<sup>th</sup> Thursday  
XMAS

Viz: 0 Temp. 2° - 16°

Cloudy - Snowing about 5:00 p.m.  
5" accumulation by 10:00 p.m.

R.B. Flycatcher: found dead by Edwin Bieber (R. Sharadin father-in-law)

Everyone off.

flew into truck window at his residence: Kate's bridge rd. 3

Kutztown. ONLY WINTER RECORD! *harsh record.*

\* later, proved to be Dusky Flycatcher - (oberholzerii) Dr. Ned Johnson, Boulder, Calif.

26<sup>th</sup> Friday

Viz: 0 Temp. 12° - 21°

Snowfall 16"  
Snowing all night. 4:30 p.m. heavy wind  
bleggard conditions. Heavy drifting. Snow  
cleared by snow.

SNOW BOUND

Plowing snow all day!  
extremely difficult due to the  
extreme drifting. some drifts on the  
mountain road and down way were 4' high.

Fred, Dick, Barb - snowbound!

Full time job just keeping the bird feeders open!!!

PHOEBE  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
(charter, farms)  
NO.

*Empidonax oberholseri*, Phillips

Immature ♀

DUSKY FLYCATCHER

Hatched bmo. prior to find

Breeds from southern Yukon, northwestern and Central Br. Columbia south to Southern California

Winters from southeastern Arizona + near western Mexico as far south as Guerrero and Oaxaca

Address:

Dr. Ned K. Johnson  
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology  
2593 Life Sciences Bldg.,  
BERKELEY, California 94720

Found by Edwin Bieber, Kutztown,  
December 25, 1969  
2 mi. due north - Kutztown, Pa.

Dr. Ned K. Johnson  
Curator of Birds and Associate  
Professor of Zoology.

formerly identified as *ny. B. Flycatcher*  
*E. flaviventris*

Phonud Poole - suggested contacting Chan Robbins for status in east.

Snow fall during period.

Dec. 11	2.5"
" 14	5.-
" 20	1.0
" 22	16.-
" 24	1.0
" 25	5.-
" 26	16.-
<hr/>	
	<u>46.5"</u>

} 25.5" snowfall prior to finding Flycatcher.



Reply to:  
MUSEUM OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY  
2593 LIFE SCIENCES BUILDING  
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

October 7, 1970

Mr. Frederick W. Wetzel  
Assistant Curator  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association  
Route 2, Kempton  
Pennsylvania 19529

Dear Mr. Wetzel:

I have been in Peru for the past two months, and only now have been able to examine your specimen of Empidonax sent in late May. This one looks to me like Empidonax oberholseri, both from the standpoint of general coloration and wing shape. It is certainly not flaviventris. I am fairly certain that your bird is an immature, that is, it was hatched perhaps six months prior to having been found dead, and I also think it is very likely a female rather than a male as labelled. This assumption is based on wing shape, which in your bird is closest to the pattern shown by immature females. There is some overlap here, however, and it still could be an immature male. In any event a winter specimen of Empidonax oberholseri is of considerable interest from the eastern United States, and I trust that someone back there will prepare the information for publication. Thank you indeed for letting me see this interesting bird. The specimen will be packed for return via parcel post under insurance for \$25.00 within the next few days.

Sincerely,

*Ned K. Johnson*

Ned K. Johnson  
Curator of Birds and  
Associate Professor of Zoology

NKJ:o'c

*All other measurements are appropriate for oberholseri as well. In coloration including pale lower mandible, it matches winter immatures from Mexico.*

*check by Howard Johnson*

December 7, 1970

Mr. Chandler S. Robbins  
7900 Brooklyn Bridge Road  
Laurel, Maryland 20810

Dear Chan,

Perhaps you will recall that when you were here I mentioned that we had found an Empidonax flycatcher on Christmas day in 1969, and that the specimen was at that time in the hands of Dr. Ned K. Johnson of the University of California for identification. Well, the specimen has been returned, and it turns out that the bird is a dusky flycatcher Empidonax oberholseri and not a yellow-bellied flycatcher as we had at first suspected. So far as we can determine, this is the first record for the bird in Pennsylvania, but we would like to know more of the general status of the bird in the east. We thought perhaps you could shed some light on this, and any information you might have on previous records of the bird or where we might find such information would be greatly appreciated. We are presently preparing the information on our specimen for publication.

You may be interested to know that our osprey count for the season hit 600- highest ever in the sanctuary's history.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

*Fred*



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
Migratory Bird Populations Station  
Laurel, Maryland 20810

December 17, 1970

Mr. Fred W. Wetzel  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association  
Route 2  
Kempton, Pennsylvania 19529

Dear Fred:

Congratulations on your Dusky Flycatcher! This is the first record east of the Mississippi and perhaps the first east of the States in which the species breeds.

I am enclosing the range description from the AOU Check-List. I am also enclosing a copy of the distribution section from Bent and copies of two records from our files: one from Kansas the other from Manitoba.

Apparently Godfrey in his Birds of Canada did not accept Taverner's report from the Auk.

Sutton in his Oklahoma Birds summarizes the status for Oklahoma and surrounding States (see enclosed photocopy).

There is an old report for western South Dakota, but this has not been cited by recent authors and apparently is not considered valid.

Congratulations on your very high Osprey count for this season!

Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely yours,

Chandler S. Robbins, Chief  
Non-Game Bird Studies

Enclosures

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary  
Kempton, Pennsylvania  
January 17, 1971

Dusky Flycatcher in Pennsylvania.- On December 25, 1966, a small flycatcher, which had apparently struck the window of a truck, was found dead by Mr. Edwin Bieber two miles due north of Pottstown, Berks County, Pennsylvania. The bird was taken to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary where I prepared a skin. Examination of the carcass showed the crop and stomach to be empty, but the bird did not appear to be emaciated even though the weather for the five days preceding the find was characterized by cold temperatures and heavy snows (25.5"). Although the bird proved to be an Empidonax flycatcher, its specific identification was in doubt. The skin was sent to Ned K. Johnson, Curator of Birds and Associate Professor of Zoology at Berkeley for identification. In his letter to me of October 7, 1970, he identified the specimen as an immature <sup>female</sup> Dusky Flycatcher ( Empidonax oberholseri ) on the basis of wing shape and general coloration. He further stated that in coloration, including the pale lower mandible of the specimen, it matched winter immatures from Mexico.

The location where the specimen was found is not very distant from the location where a specimen of Empidonax hammondi was collected in December 1966 ( Reintzelman, Auk, 85 : 512, 1968 ). This finding of Empidonax oberholseri adds further support to the theory of Phillips,



Howe and Lanyon ( Bird-Banding, 37 : 155-171, 1966) that small flycatchers found very late in the northeastern United States may include western species.

To the best of our knowledge, the finding of Empidonax oberholseri in Pennsylvania constitutes a new record for that state and is the first record of the occurrence of the species east of the Mississippi River.

Our sincere thanks are extended to Ned K. Johnson for the identification of the specimen and to Chandler J. Robbins for his help in establishing the status of the bird in the eastern United States. - Frederick J. Wetzel, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Kempton, Pennsylvania 19529.

536-01-1969

A Century of Bird Life in Berks County, Pennsylvania

**DUSKY FLYCATCHER** *Empidonax oberholseri*

*Accidental*

Edwin Bieber found a freshly killed flycatcher on the seat of his pick-up truck parked inside a shed near Kutz's Bridge, Kutztown R.D. 3, on December 25, 1969. He gave the bird to Richard Sharadin, who brought it to Alex Nagy at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary for identification. Sharadin said that the bird was in great shape and clearly had died only recently. Fred Wetzel prepared a study skin of the bird. His examination of the carcass showed the crop and stomach to be empty, but the bird did not appear to be emaciated even though the weather for the five days preceding the find was characterized by cold temperatures and heavy snows.

The specimen was later sent to Dr. Ned K. Johnson, curator of birds and professor of zoology at the University of California at Berkeley, who identified it as a Dusky Flycatcher. He writes on October 7, 1970: "This one looks to me like *Empidonax oberholseri*, both from the standpoint of general coloration and wing shape. ...I am fairly certain that your bird is an immature, that is, it was hatched perhaps six months prior to having been found dead, and I also think it is very likely a female. ...This assumption is based on wing shape, which in your bird is closest to the pattern shown by immature females. ...All other measurements are appropriate for *oberholseri* as well. In coloration including pale lower mandible, it matches winter immatures from Mexico."

Chandler Robbins of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service reports in a letter to Wetzel dated December 17, 1970, that this is the first record of this species from east of the Mississippi River and perhaps the first east of the states in which the species breeds. The Dusky Flycatcher breeds from the southern Yukon and northwestern and central British Columbia south to southern California. It winters from southeastern Arizona through western Mexico as far south as Guerrero and Oaxaca.

Unfortunately, the specimen was misplaced and, as of this writing, could not be located.

Coincidentally, on December 23, 1966, Donald Heintzelman collected a Hammond's Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*) near Schnecksville, Lehigh County, for the first Pennsylvania record of this western *Empidonax* species (Heintzelman, 1968:512). This location is less than 20 miles from where the Dusky Flycatcher was found.

These two records indicate that there can be a late autumn or early winter movement of some western flycatchers to the eastern United States.

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Tabulation Form - Round One**

Species: Dusky Flycatcher (Empidonax oberholseri)

Date of Sighting: 25 December 1969 to 25 December 1969

Location: KUTZTOWN

County: BERKS

Observer(s): Edwin Bieber

Date of Submission: 2000

Submitted by: Bill Uhrich

Written Description: Yes

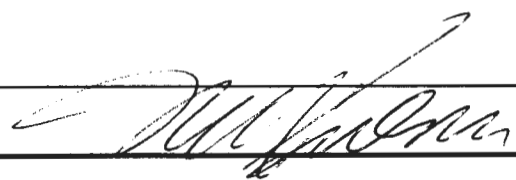
Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

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. Ickes			X					
B. Reid			X					
<del>P. Rodewald</del> <i>R. Lebesch</i>				X				
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS		1	3	1	2			
DECISION								

Comments: Specimen apparently lost 4/3 GO TO 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 11/19/01