

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review (to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for). Attach additional pages as necessary. Please print or type. Attach xerox of field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216.

1. English and Scientific names: *Gray Flycatcher, Empidonax wrightii*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
One, age-sex unknown
3. Locality: Parish: Plaquemines
Specific Locality: Diamond--park/rec area, in area of RV hookups just south of playground
4. Date(s) when observed: *28 January 2019*
5. Time(s) of day when observed: *0750-0900 CST*
6. Reporting observer and address: *Robert C. Dobbs, Lafayette, LA*
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): *none*
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s): *Discovered by Michelle McLindon, Van Remsen, David Muth, and others on 26 January 2019; subsequently seen by many.*
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): *Bright, early morning sunlight under clear sky, and in deep shade of live oaks.*
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): *Swarovski 8x30 binos (good condition), Nikon AF-S 300 mm 1:4 D camera lens (good condition)*
11. Distance to bird(s): *5-20 m*
12. Duration of observation: *approx. 70 min, off-and-on*

13. **Habitat:** Manicured park with mowed grassy areas, scattered posts, live oaks, fences, and power lines, bordering nearby woods.

14. **Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):** I located the bird as it was calling from outer branches of a live oak, and followed it around, off-and-on, for the next 70 min or so as it perched in/on and foraged from other small live oaks, small leafless trees, posts, and a powerline. It spent most of its time foraging, generally by making sally-pounce attacks down to the ground, presumably for small insects. It was often vocal. The bird regularly (nearly continuously) dipped its tail, phoebe-like. It would raise its tail quickly, then lower it in a deliberate fashion. The bird did not flick or twitch its wings or tail.

15. **Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species, body bulk, shape, proportions, bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species):** A flycatcher of the genus *Empidonax*. A very gray Empid, with some olive tones in the back, which were most apparent when the bird was in the shade. In direct sunlight, it appeared almost entirely gray above, and off-white below. Photos suggest a slight tinge of yellowish on the belly, but subtle (I did not notice yellowish tones in the field).

Flight feathers darker gray than back, with white tips to lesser and median secondary coverts, creating two white wingbars, and white edging on tertials. Very thin, white edge on outer rectrices (visible in photo; did not notice in life). Flight photo suggests that primaries, at least the outer primaries, may be older than the secondaries; those primaries look more brownish-gray, and possibly more worn (but not clear), than darker, blackish-gray secondaries. Inner two rectrices appear shorter and more worn than other rectrices.

Very rounded head with no crest or bushiness. Thin, relatively long, straight-sided bill with an almost entirely yellowish mandible; perhaps a very small bit of dark color at very tip of bill. Legs and feet black. Thin, round, white eyering, and a faint pale area in lores. Moderate to short-ish primary projection. Relatively long tailed-looking.

16. **Voice:** Regularly gave “whit” calls; occasionally an abrupt “ch-dp”-like call with a slightly burry quality.

17. **Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):** Tail-dipping phoebes easily eliminated by their larger size, larger black mandibles, darker upperparts (Eastern) and/or rusty underparts (Say’s), and different calls (none of them “whit”). Given its uniqueness, characteristic and stereotyped form, and the fact that this bird was doing it habitually, the tail-dipping behavior more-or-less eliminates other *Empidonax* species and

solidifies the Gray Flycatcher ID. Nevertheless, three other Empidonax species give “whit” calls, similar to Gray Flycatcher. The most similar visually, by far, is Dusky Flycatcher. In addition to lacking the tail-dipping habit, Dusky Flycatcher should have a darker mandible, be a bit more olive on the upperparts, show a hint of olive-grayish in breast, and perhaps appear even longer tailed than Gray. Least Flycatcher--the most expected Louisiana winter empid--also gives “whit” calls, and also has a white throat. Least Flycatcher, though, in addition to lacking tail-dipping habit, has a shorter, wider bill, with some dark color on the mandible, typically shows at least a hint of grayish in the breast, and generally appears to be a more diminutive bird, with a shorter, thinner tail. Willow Flycatcher, also a “whit”-er, also lacks the tail-dipping habit, is a darker brownish-olive above, has a much bigger, wider bill, and is a much more robust bird in general. Finally, this bird’s foraging behavior, which consisted almost entirely of sally-pounce maneuvers to the ground, is typical of Gray Flycatcher, and not typical of Dusky or Least (or Willow) flycatchers.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? Attached?): [Photos and audio by R. Dobbs, attached.](#)

19. Previous experience with this species: [Extensive from much time in the Great Basin; and with Dusky Flycatcher from much time in Rocky Mtns/Colorado Plateau \(where I studied Dusky breeding biology\).](#)

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: [none](#)

b. after observation: [Nat Geo Complete Guide to Birds of North America.](#)

21. This description is written from: notes made during the observation (notes attached?); notes made after the observation (date:); memory; images taken during the observation.

22. Are you positive of your identification if not, explain: [Yes](#)

23. Date: [14 Feb 2019](#) Time: [2100 CST](#)

24. May the LBRC have permission to display this report or portions of this report on its website? [Yes](#)

If yes, may we include your name with the report? [Yes](#)









