

Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*)



Interesting Facts

- During the fall, the color of the wing bars can be used to determine the age of the bird: juveniles have brownish wing bars and adults have whitish wing bars.
- In more southern locations, Alders are so similar to another species (Willow Flycatcher) that the only way they can reliably be identified is by their voice.

Identification

As a group, the flycatchers can be very difficult to identify because there are a number of species which look very similar. Alders are slightly larger than the other closely related flycatchers and some other identification tips include the large flat bill, slight eye ring and whitish throat. The voice of this species is also a very distinctive 'f-bee-oo' that often reveals its presence.

Breeding & Winter Range

During the summer breeding season, this species can be found across much of the Boreal forest in Canada and the northern United States from Newfoundland to Alaska. In the Yukon, they breed wherever suitable habitat is present, with the exception of the extreme northern portion. This species spends the winter months in South America from Columbia to northern Argentina. Two individuals banded at the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory have been recovered during migration: one in South America (Columbia) and one in southwestern Alberta.



Habitat

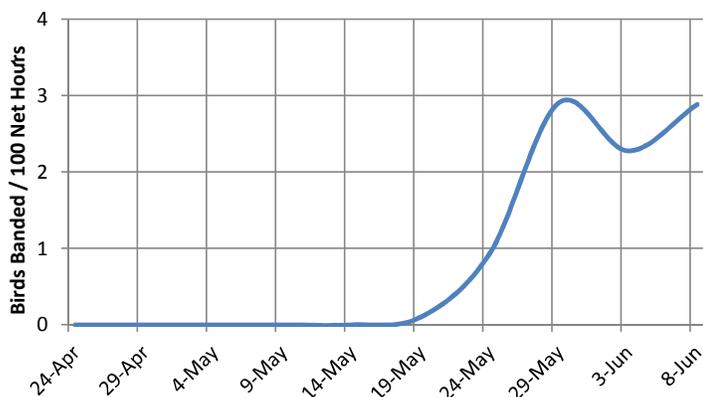
Habitat can often be a useful tool in assisting with flycatcher identification because most species are found in specific types of habitats. Alders are most often found in shrubs (alder or willows), especially near water. They can be found along the margins or wetlands or in the riparian zone of lakes and rivers where they are dense shrubs. During migration they are typically found in similar habitats.

Diet

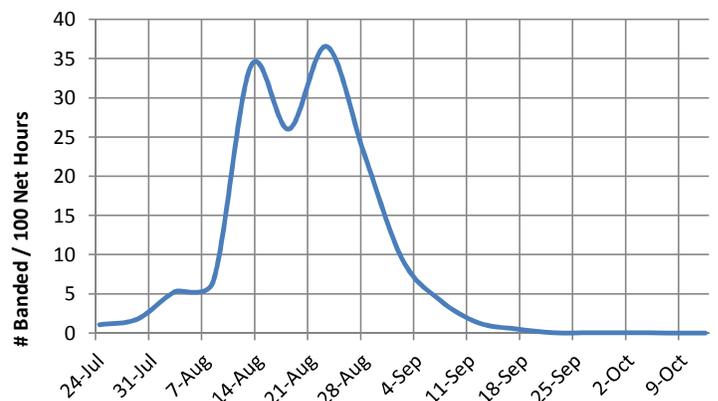
This species feeds exclusively on insects which it spots from a perch and flies out to catch in mid flight, often returning to the same perch.

When To See Them at the Yukon Bird Observatories

During spring, the first individuals are usually seen during the last week of May (see lower left figure). The best time to see this species is during the fall, particularly at the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory where it is banded in the highest numbers during the middle of August (see lower right figure).



Alder Flycatcher spring migration timing at the Albert Creek Bird Observatory



Alder Flycatcher fall migration timing at the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory