

WILLOW FLYCATCHER
BIOLOGY

Empidonax Flycatchers

- 10 species common in North America
- Very similar in appearance
- Song differences diagnostic
- Monomorphic



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher



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Sexes are identical

Long, broad bill; upper mandible dark, lower light

Whitish throat

Weak or no eye-ring

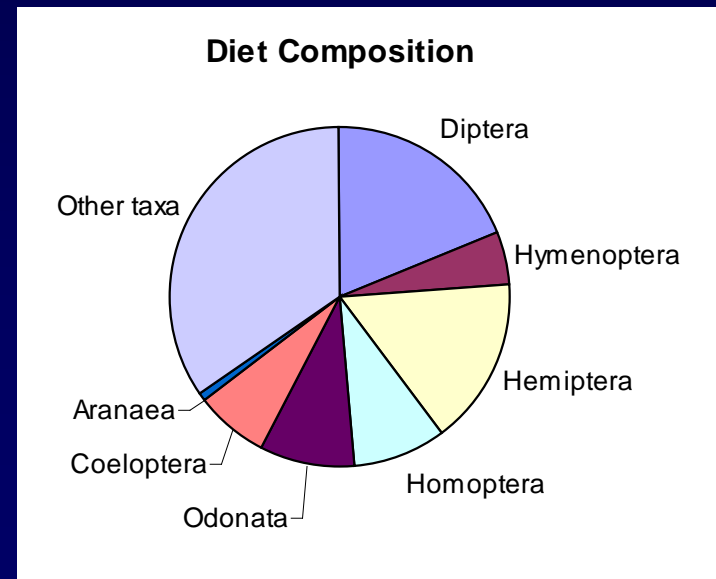
Underparts – pale, brownish-olive, yellow

Long wingtips

Flicks tail up

Foraging and Diet

- Insectivorous
- Aerial forager (openings/canopy)
- Generalist in diet (varies by site)



Mating System

- Usually socially monogamous (10- 20% males in the Kern population are polygynous)
- Pair formation occurs after females arrive



Nest Initiation and Construction

- Within a week of pair formation
- Late May/ mid-June here but varies by site
- 3-8 days for construction
- Open cup nest, attached to slender stems or twigs, trailing material





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Willow Flycatcher Nests

- Nest Substrate
 - Including willow, box elder, ash, nettle, live oak, tamarisk
 - Structure more important than species
- Nest Height
 - Average 2-3m
 - Range at Kern 0.8-16.0 m



Clutch Size

- 3-4 on first nesting attempt
- Fewer on subsequent attempts
- Lay 1 egg per day but laying often takes 5 days for 4 egg clutches



Incubation



12 to 13 days from last egg

Nestling Care

- Female performs most of the brooding
- Both adults feed young but female does most of feeding (often > 90%)



Renesting

- Replacement Clutches
 - Common
 - Do not reuse old nest
 - Latest here in August
- Second Clutches
 - None some years, up to 10 to 15% of pairs in other years



Fledging

- Young fledge at 12-15 days
- Both parents feed fledged young for approximately 16-18 days
- Fledglings often remain near nesting territory until independence



Departure for Wintering Grounds

- Difficult to determine precisely because birds are hard to follow after fledging.
- Late August/ mid September in the Kern River Valley

