

Eastern Wood-Pewee

Contopus virens



Among long-distance migrants that nest in Vermont, the Eastern Wood-Pewee and the Red-eyed Vireo are unusual in that they continue singing well after nesting has been completed. No studies have thus far addressed the possible functions of post-breeding, early autumnal song for these species, but possible explanations include defense of a feeding area prior to migration, and staking out a territory to be used the following year. Eastern Wood-Pewees breed throughout much of the eastern United States and north into Canada as far as the Saint Lawrence River Valley (McCarty 1996). Eastern Wood-Pewees have been known in Vermont since before 1850 (Thompson 1842) but were probably less numerous during the extensive deforestation of that century (Ellison 1985). The species winters in South America, from Colombia and Venezuela south through western Brazil to Bolivia (AOU 1998). From a human perspective, the distance traveled by these small birds during their migrations is nothing less than remarkable.

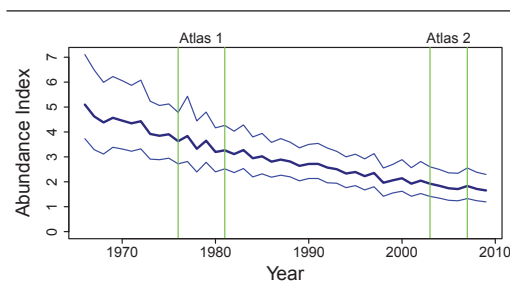
Eastern Wood-Pewees breed arboreally in open deciduous or mixed woodlands where, in some cases, there is a clear edge between the forest and patches of open habitat (McCarty 1996). Nest building was recorded in 13 blocks from 2 June to 11 July. Dates from the latter part of this interval possibly represent renesting after earlier failed attempts. It is unknown whether this species will renest if an initial nesting is successful (McCarty 1996, Baicich and Harrison 1997). Three nests with eggs were found from 24 June to 4 July, and nestlings were found in 7 blocks from 24 June to 7 August. Fledglings were observed in 18 blocks from 18 June to 11 August. Two reports of fledglings in June seem implausibly early and are possibly attributable to observations of courtship feeding.

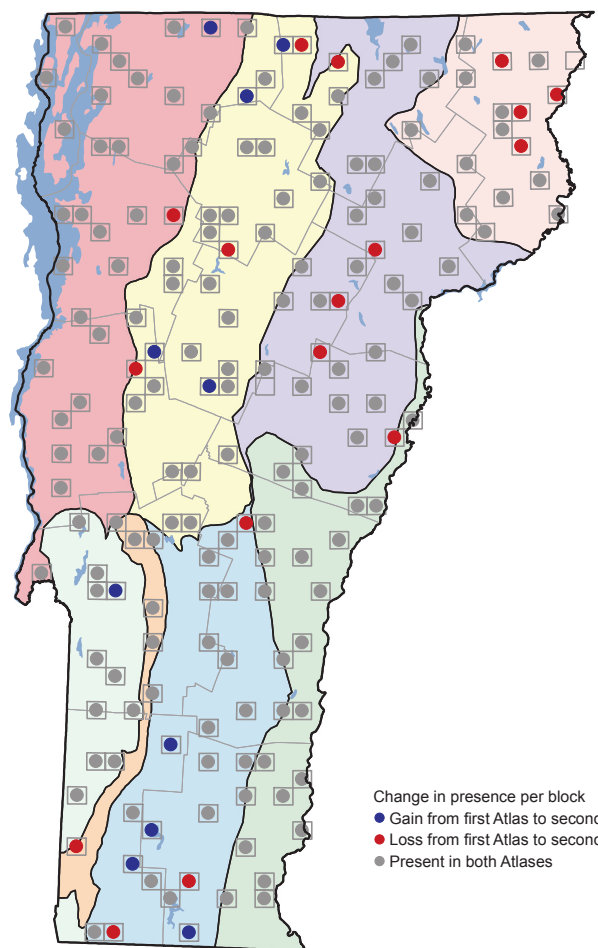
During both atlases the Eastern Wood-Pewee was found throughout Vermont but occurred less frequently in the northeastern part of the state. In the second atlas, this species was recorded in 4 percent fewer blocks statewide. Decreases were most notable in the Northeastern Highlands and the Northern Vermont Piedmont.

Breeding Bird Survey results from 1982 to 2007 showed

significant decreases in Eastern Wood-Pewee populations in the Atlantic Northern Forest (Bird Conservation Region 14) and in Vermont (2.8 and 1.9 percent annually, respectively; Sauer et al. 2011). Other monitoring programs in Vermont and Quebec have not found significant trends. The Vermont Forest Bird Monitoring Program surveyed 19 sites from 1989 to 2006 and found a non-significant 1.5 percent per year decline (Rimmer et al. 2007). Using checklist data from 1971 to 1992, Dunn et al. (2001) found a non-significant declining trend in Quebec. Atlas results vary, but overall show little change in distribution. Maryland and Pennsylvania's second atlases showed 2 percent and 1 percent increases, respectively, in the number of occupied blocks (Ellison 2010, Wilson et al. 2012). New York's second atlas showed a 4 percent decrease statewide, notably in the Adirondacks (McGowan 2008). In the second Ontario atlas, there was overall little change, but losses were conspicuous to the north of 45 degrees latitude (McLaren 2007).

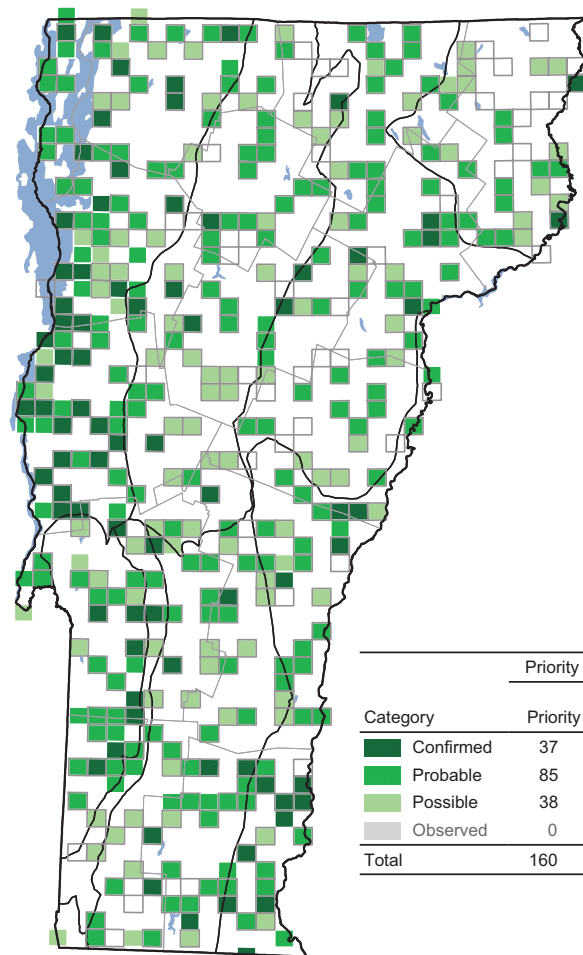
RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OVER TIME





CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

Biophysical Region	First Atlas	Second Atlas	Change	% Change
Champlain Valley	32	32	+ 0	+ 0
Northeastern Highlands	16	12	- 4	- 25
Northern Green Mountains	31	31	+ 0	+ 0
Northern Vermont Piedmont	29	25	- 4	- 14
Southern Green Mountains	23	24	+ 1	+ 4
Southern Vermont Piedmont	21	21	+ 0	+ 0
Taconic Mountains	10	11	+ 1	+ 10
Vermont Valley	5	4	- 1	- 20
Totals	167	160	- 7	- 4



Category	Priority Block Count	
	Priority 1	Priority 1 & 2
Confirmed	37	68
Probable	85	166
Possible	38	87
Observed	0	0
Total	160	321

DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

Biophysical Region	% of region species occupies	% of all records for this species found in region
Champlain Valley	98	22
Northeastern Highlands	70	8
Northern Green Mountains	83	17
Northern Vermont Piedmont	83	17
Southern Green Mountains	92	16
Southern Vermont Piedmont	87	11
Taconic Mountains	100	7
Vermont Valley	87	2

Although Eastern Wood-Pewee population declines have not been dramatic, there are several potential threats to the species. Evidence from the mid-Atlantic states indicates that extensive browsing by white-tailed deer has depleted subcanopy vegetation where pewees forage (McCarty 1996, McShea and Rappole 2000). Forest maturation, including in Vermont, might be negatively affecting pewees by reducing open woodland habitat favorable for nesting (McGowan 2008). Because declines have been documented across the pewee's range, McGowan (2008) suggested that the species may be facing issues on the

wintering grounds. The Eastern Wood-Pewee remains a common breeder in Vermont, but range-wide population declines mark it as a species whose status warrants continued monitoring.

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