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NOTES ON THE LIFE HISTORY OF TRAILL'S FLYCATCHER (EMPIDONAX TRAILLII) IN SOUTHEASTERN WASHINGTON

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THE recent growth of interest in the nesting ecology, voice, and habits of Traill's Flycatcher (Empidonax traillii) in relation to the taxonomic segregation of this species into its several races prompts me to record these observations on the hitherto neglected western race, E. t. brewsteri. Recurrent disagreements and difficulties regarding racial differentiation, particularly in the West (cf. Aldrich, 1951; Phillips, 1948; Miller, 1941), render field studies of Traill's Flycatcher in various parts of its range an especially pertinent adjunct of taxonomic studies based on museum skins, as Berger and Parmelee (1952) have previously stated. Although the present study is not aimed at a principally taxonomic target, items of potential taxonomic significance, such as voice and nesting habitat, have been given special emphasis and are compared with similar phenomena elsewhere in the range of the species. The population of Empidonax traillii discussed below lies within the range of the proposed race adastus (Oberholser, 1932; Aldrich, in litt.), but the older racial name must be retained in this paper, pending acceptance of adastus by the American Ornithologists' Union's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds.

The area concerned in this study is a tract of approximately two hundred square miles lying north and northwest of Pullman, Whitman County, southeastern Washington. During the spring and summer of 1952, I was afield during 121 days and engaged in a general survey of the breeding bird population by intensive studies at 5 major and 11 minor stations and by extensive periodic reconnaissance trips throughout the tract. Although this study was not devoted to any particular group or species, it yielded a thorough qualitative appraisal of the habitat distribution of Traill's Flycatcher and much preliminary data concerning its behavior and nesting ecology. I examined 22 nests in 1952, but it was not possible to revisit them regularly, and only partial histories were obtained. During 1953, I was able to spend only late afternoon hours and an occasional weekend in the field between 15 May and 30 August. Most of this time was utilized in the intensive study of a restricted population of Traill's Flycatchers four miles north of Pullman, although some time was also spent in observation and nest-searching throughout the area studied the previous year. Information on the growth of nestlings, population