
The Willow Flycatcher is an increasingly common breeder in the lower Hudson River Valley in open, brushy or shrubby fields.

Conservation Status

Continent-wide, Willow Flycatcher populations have declined significantly in the past four decades, which has led to its “Yellow” designation on the Audubon WatchList. Additionally, it is listed as a species of Continental Concern by Partners in Flight in Bird Conservation Regions 13, 14, 28, and 30. However, Breeding Bird Survey data indicate that its population has significantly increased in New York since 1966. Breeding Bird Atlas data show an increase in distribution over the past twenty years.

**Identification**

The Willow Flycatcher is a small, hard-to-identify flycatcher of early successional habitats. It has olive-brown upperparts, two whitish wing bars, and indistinct eye ring, white throat and yellowish belly. Field identification of this species is possible mainly by its "fitz-bew" song.

Habitat

The Willow Flycatcher is found in open, brushy fields, including shrubby areas of hawthorn, apple, and dogwoods in old fields, wet thickets of alder, buttonbush, viburnum and willow along streams, damp to dry upland fields overgrown with shrubs and utility rights-of-way.

Food

This species feeds primarily on insects, including bees, wasps, ants, beetles, dragonflies, butterflies, and moths. During fall migration, fruit is consumed, including blackberries, raspberries, and dogwood berries. As its name implies, it is adept at catching insects on the wing, but also by gleaning vegetation, usually while hovering.

Nesting

The Willow Flycatcher breeds in thickets or groves of small trees and shrubs surrounded by grasslands or near bodies of water in open areas. The nest is built by the female in a dense shrub or small tree, such as dogwood, hawthorn, willow, buttonbush, elder, viburnum, or blackberry. The nest is an open cup made of grass, bark strips and plant fibers and is built around supporting twigs 5-20 feet above the ground.

Threats

- Destruction of habitat due to succession.
- Destruction of habitat due to suburbanization.
- Parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbird.

Habitat Management

No habitat management guidelines for eastern populations are available. All management guidelines are for western populations, where it is endangered.

This management summary is adapted from NatureServe 2009 and Sedgwick 2000.

For additional information, see the following references:

Bonney, R. E., Jr. and J. L. Burrill. 1988. Willow Flycatcher. Pages 254–255 in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* (R. F. Andrie and J. R. Carroll, eds.). Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, NY.

NatureServe. 2009. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: May 21, 2009).

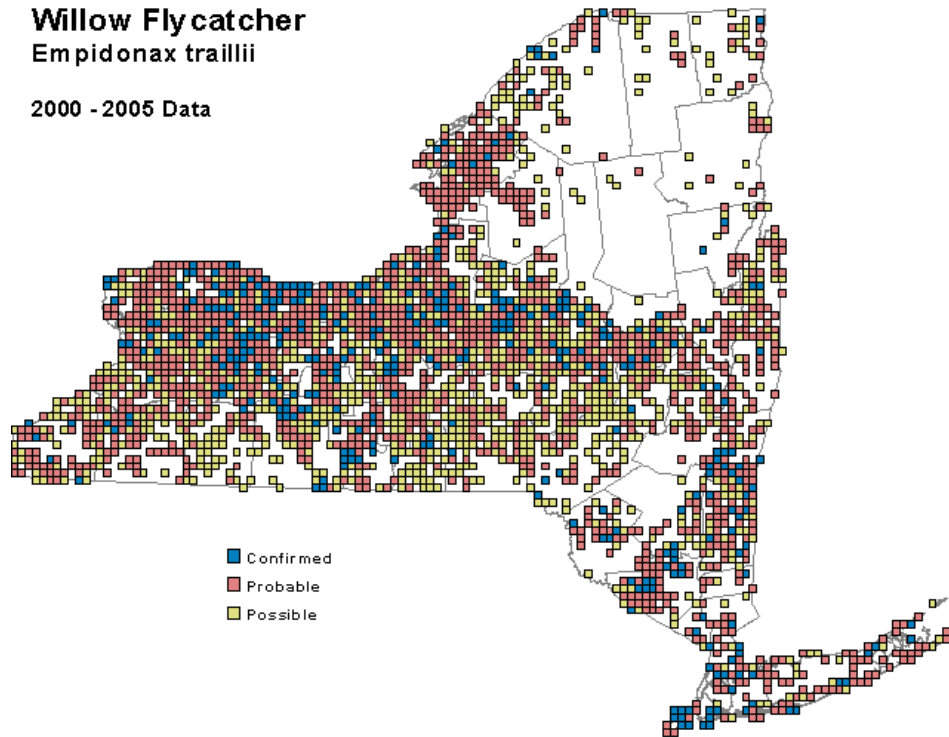
Sedgwick, James A. 2000. Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/533>

NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Willow Flycatcher

Empidonax traillii

2000 - 2005 Data

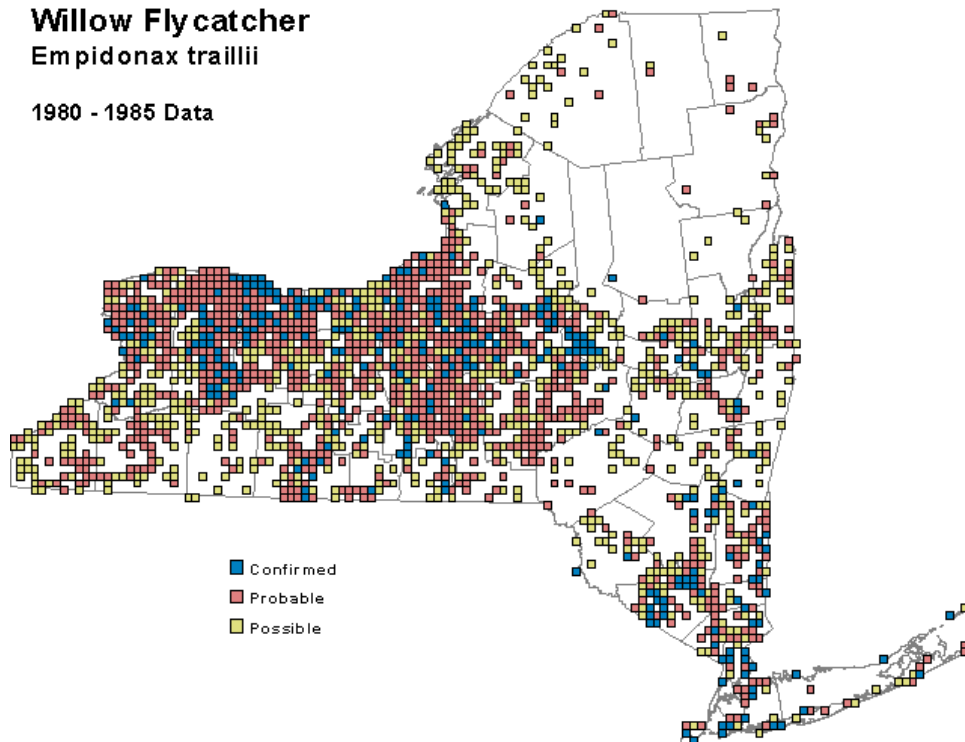


- Confirmed
- Probable
- Possible

Willow Flycatcher

Empidonax traillii

1980 - 1985 Data



- Confirmed
- Probable
- Possible