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## Two Same-season, Long-distance Recaptures of Alder Flycatchers in Alaska

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The Table of Contents Oct -Sept 2018 Vol.43 No. 4, Jan - Mar 2019 Vol.44 No. 1 should be as follows under:

#### **Western Regional News**

**147 Western Bird Banding Association  
Annual Meeting - Brighton, Colorado  
147 Annual Summary of Birds Banded  
in 2017, in the WBBA Region  
Walter H. SAKAI, WBBA EDITOR**

## **Two Same-season, Long-distance Recaptures of Alder Flycatchers in Alaska**

### **Introduction**

The accurate identification of Alder and Willow flycatchers in the hand by banders has been problematic where the two co-occur during migration. Species' identification is easier with breeding populations which are, for the most part, geographically separated.

**Captures in Nebraska:** WCS banded an Alder Flycatcher at Cedar Point Biological Station in Nebraska on 28 May 1993 that was recaptured in Alaska. This recapture was reported in Brown et al. (1996) and Sharpe et. al (2001), but without specifics on sites, dates, lat/long, and band number. Another Alder Flycatcher banded by WCS in central Nebraska at Cottonwood Ranch on 5 Jun 2001 reported in Johnsgard (2018) without specifics was also recaptured in Alaska. Our total capture effort in Nebraska amounted to 53,536.6 net-hr with 68.9% accomplished during seven seasons at Cedar Point Biological Station, and 31.1% during six seasons in central Nebraska.

In submitting banding records, WCS initially identified these *Empidonax* species based mostly on the color of upperparts (before the publication of Pyle 1997). This prompted a terse letter from M. Kathleen Klimkiewicz (Banding Lab Biologist). She changed all Willow and Alder flycatcher identifications to Traill's Flycatchers because of the difficulty in separating these species. That policy apparently continues to be followed by the Banding Lab. WCS was encouraged to continue recording the color-based identity of the two species by Linda R. Brown, who, with Paul A. Johnsgard, had recently finished a museum project on separating the two species. Johnsgard describes the Alder Flycatcher as "apparently a regular migrant in Nebraska," (Johnsgard 2018), and Ely (1970) documents heavy migrations of Traill's Flycatchers through adjacent west-central Kansas. WCS continued recording the color types as separate species in his notes. At Cedar Point Biological Station, 177 birds were banded as

Traill's Flycatchers, with 109 initially identified by color of upperparts as Willow Flycatchers and 68 as Alder Flycatchers. In central Nebraska, of 141 Traill's Flycatchers banded, 92 were the color of Willow Flycatchers and 69 were colored like Alder Flycatchers (Scharf 2007).

**Recaptures in Alaska:** The first recaptured Nebraska-banded Alder Flycatcher (see Table 1.) was by A-MB in 1993 at the Alaska Bird Observatory at College, AK. Distance from Cedar Point Biological Station to Alaska Bird Observatory is 4025 km (2501 mi). The second recapture from Nebraska, initially recorded as a Willow Flycatcher, was during August 2001 when it had the remains of a brood patch, no apparent molt, the remiges and rectrices were old and the skull was completely ossified. It was caught by KWL at Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, near Tok, AK, 320 km (200 mi) southeast of Fairbanks. Distance from Cottonwood Ranch to Tok is 3785 km (2352 mi). Recaptures indicated that both of the Nebraska birds were Alder Flycatchers because Willow Flycatchers are not found as far north as Alaska.

A-MB found from data at Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska Bird Observatory, and other sites that the median date of Alder Flycatcher arrival on the Alaskan breeding grounds was 10 Jun (range 3-16 Jun) with 28 Jul being the departure date (range 15 Jul-28 Aug). Total frost-free days for Fairbanks is 50 days. Total days between median dates of arrival and departure are 49 days (or 48 days as reported in Benson 2001). It is well known that flying insect availability for Alder Flycatcher feeding is negatively affected by frosts. There has been a strong selection pressure for Alder Flycatchers to complete their annual breeding cycle in 49 days. Perhaps climate change will affect the phenology of Alder Flycatchers.

"Considering there have only been 7 Alder Flycatcher recoveries away from the place of banding, it seems unfair that one bander should get 2 of them." (Danny Bystrak, USGS Bird Banding Laboratory, pers. comm.).

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School of Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska. In the central Platte Valley portion of this study, funding was obtained through successive contracts between the author and Nebraska Public Power District, and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District. Mark Peyton and Jim Jenniges, in their roles as biologists for Jeffrey Island Habitat Area, and Cottonwood Ranch respectively, were vital in the conduct of this project in numerous ways. I thank Riley Anderson, William J. Berigan, Linda R. Brown, Josef Kren, and Nick Morgan for assistance with mist nets, bird capture and data recording. Paul A. Johnsgard gave critique on earlier manuscripts and enabled Kren and Berigan's work effort at CPBS. The work described in this paper was permitted by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee of the University of Nebraska, a banding permit from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and a Master Banding permit from the U.S. Geological Survey to WCS.

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**Table 1. Recaptured  
 Alder Flycatchers**

Band	Band Date	Location	Lat/Long	Recap Date	Location	Lat/Long
1830-95361	28 May 1993	Cedar Point Biol. Station, Keith Co., NE.	41° 12' N 101° 40' W	7 Aug 1993	College, AK	64° 30' N 147° 30' W
2390-83477	5 Jun 2001	Cottonwood Ranch, Phelps Co., NE	40° 40' N 99° 29' W	2 Aug 2001	Tok, AK	63° 21' N 143° 12' W

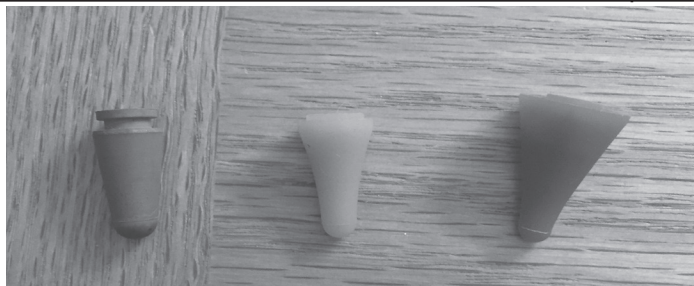
## Using Knitting Needles to Hold Bands Open

I have been using knitting needles to hold bands open since first learning to band, approximately 25 years ago. I find it saves time, especially during the busy days of fall migration. We use Porzana pliers, that do not have a band opener, so having the bands pre-opened makes banding quick and efficient.

I spend time before the start of each banding season placing bands on needles. I add to them as needed during the course of the year, usually placing the bands on needles while relaxing in the evening. I always have the next string of bands on needles ready to go in case we finish a string of 100 during banding operations.

Aluminum needles are better to use than plastic or wood. It takes two long, straight knitting needles for each 100 set of bands from sizes 0A-1D. For band sizes 2 and 3 you will need two long and one short knitting needle. I don't place larger bands on needles as we use them infrequently. I also don't pre-open hummingbird bands.

Fifty bands will fit on one knitting needle for band sizes 0A-1D. I work backwards, starting with band number 00 through 51. I start the second needle with band number 50 and end with 1, so each needle is ready to go. For the smaller band sizes 0A through 1, I use my thumbs to push the band on the needle. With the band opening facing you and your thumbs on each side of the band, it doesn't take much pressure to push the band on the needle. Your hands will get dirty and you will probably end up with an indentation on your thumbnails, but a couple of swipes with an emery board over your nails should help. For larger bands, I use my old MacDonald pliers that have band openers. I open each band and place it on the needle. If the band is too loose, I use the pliers to tighten it. Tape is placed over the ends of each needle that displays needle size and then is marked with a sharpie pen denoting band size. Point protectors can be placed at the ends of needles when not in use so the bands will not fall off if they are loose for any reason.



**Fig. 1 Point protectors for ends of needles.**