

Greater Pewee or Coues' Flycatcher
Contopus pertinax

In summer and migration, the Western Wood-Pewee and Olive-sided Flycatcher are the only medium to large olive-gray flycatchers expected in San Diego County. Yet in winter, though any flycatcher meeting this description is rare, the most likely such species is the Eastern Phoebe, and the second most likely is the Greater Pewee. Breeding in mountain forests north to central Arizona, Greater Pewees show up in southern California only occasionally. But those that do often remain the entire winter, establishing territories in groves of planted conifers or eucalyptus trees.

Winter: Though perhaps as few as ten individual Greater Pewees have been noted in San Diego County, the records form a tight pattern: birds overwintering in tall trees in urban parks. Some individuals have evidently returned to the same spot in successive years, especially one that spent

at least five consecutive winters on the grounds of the San Diego Zoo in Balboa Park (R8). Such returnees accounted for the Greater Pewee being recorded in San Diego County every winter from 1984 to 1995. The only record since then, of one in Bonsall (F8) 2 December 2000 (P. A. Ginsburg), differed from those earlier in its slightly more inland location. Previous records were from Buddy Todd Park in Oceanside (H6), Presidio (R8) and Balboa parks and the Maple St. canyon in San Diego (R9), and the Tijuana River valley. The records extend from 18 October (1990, San Diego Zoo, B. and I. Mazin, AB 45:152, 1991) to 14 April (1985, Presidio Park, Dunn 1988), except for the single record of a non-wintering bird, one photographed on Point Loma (S7) 6–7 October 1984 (R. E. Webster, Dunn 1988). Two records as early as 19 September were not considered or were rejected by the California Bird Records Committee (McCaskie and San Miguel 1999). The Greater Pewee was first recorded in California in 1952 (Cardiff and Cardiff 1953), in San Diego County in 1974. The planting and maturation of tall conifers and eucalyptus trees must have been a prerequisite for the bird's establishing its pattern of winter occurrence here.