

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*

A rare fall vagrant and casual winter visitor from northeastern North America, the Least Flycatcher resembles other species of *Empidonax* closely, being most distinctive in its bill, as short as a Hammond's but wider and entirely pale. Its identification requires thorough familiarity with the range of variation in

all the more frequent species of the genus.

Migration: The Least Flycatcher occurs in California primarily as a vagrant in fall. In San Diego County, at least 26 have been recorded, all but four in fall between 10 September (1980, Tijuana River valley, AB 35:227, 1981; 1985, Point Loma, R. E. Webster, AB 40:159, 1986)

and 21 October (1979, Point Loma, AB 34:202, 1980). All of these were along the coast from Point Loma to the Tijuana River valley. There is still only one specimen, from Point Loma 16 September 1967 (A. M. Craig, SDNHM 35354).

Winter: Four records: San Diego, 14–18 December 1993 (R. E. Webster, NASFN 48:248, 1994); San Dieguito River estuary (M8), 16 December 1994 (P. Unitt, AB 49:821, 1995); La Jolla, 1–3 December 1996 (K. and C. Rademaker, NASFN 51:802, 1997); Dairy Mart Pond, Tijuana River valley (V11) 28 January 1998, 26 December 1998–23 January 1999, 17 November 1999–3 February 2000, and 9 December 2001, presumably the same individual returning in successive years, despite the hiatus in 2000–2001 (G. McCaskie). The recency of the winter records suggests a trend toward increase in this species, whose main winter range extends as far north in western Mexico as Sinaloa.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca