

# LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: Western Wood-Pewee, *Contopus sordidulus*  
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):

1

3. Parish: Cameron  
Specific Locality: Peveto BRAS

4. Date(s) when observed: 22 May 2022

5. Time(s) of day when observed: Mid-morning

6. Reporting observer and city/state address

Reporting observer: Paul Conover
City: Lafayette
State: Louisiana

7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s):

8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):

9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Overcast, not great light but better for binos than camera.

10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Zeiss 10s, Nikon d5500

11. Distance to bird(s): About 20 yards at closest.

12. Duration of observation: Heard call, then got two brief looks, each of several seconds.

13. Habitat: Coastal chenier remnant

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):

I was in the parking lot at Peveto and heard a call from close by that sounded like a Western Wood-Pewee. I saw a pewee just across the road in mid-story growth and snapped a couple of photos. Because my hearing is suspect I doubted that I'd interpreted the sound correctly, and turned on Merlin to record it if/when it called again and hopefully to accurately ID the call. Within about five minutes Western Wood-Pewee came up on the Merlin screen although I wasn't able to hear it at this time. I walked around looking for the bird with no luck despite the typically conspicuous nature of pewees. For a few minutes Merlin was repeatedly lighting up for WWPE and while I would occasionally see a pewee flash through, I was unable to get a location on it. Then I lost track of the bird and Merlin ceased to report it so I wondered if the bird had moved along. However, about an hour later I saw the pewee back where I had first seen it, got a few pictures before it flew out of sight, and shortly afterward and for the next ten minutes or so Merlin began to report WWPE again. I never saw the bird again and Merlin stopped reporting it.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

Overall the pewee looked like a good candidate for WWPE but I didn't get the kinds of looks that would have made me comfortable calling it such on a strictly visual basis. The bird appeared to be plain above without much contrast between crown and face, with a lot of dusky underneath and a dark or mostly dark bill. The wingbars were weak and not very bright, especially the upper.

16. Voice: I initially heard what struck me as a Western Wood-Pewee call, a sound that I interpret as abrupt and harsh and that brings to mind the sound of the fire alarm at the school where I teach. I only detected this call once, probably because the bird was only about 60 feet from me. My hearing drops off quickly with distance, but if Merlin is correct, this bird was fairly vocal but at a greater remove from my location than when I first heard it.

The fate of this record really rests on the recordings where Merlin reported WWPE:

### Edited Clips

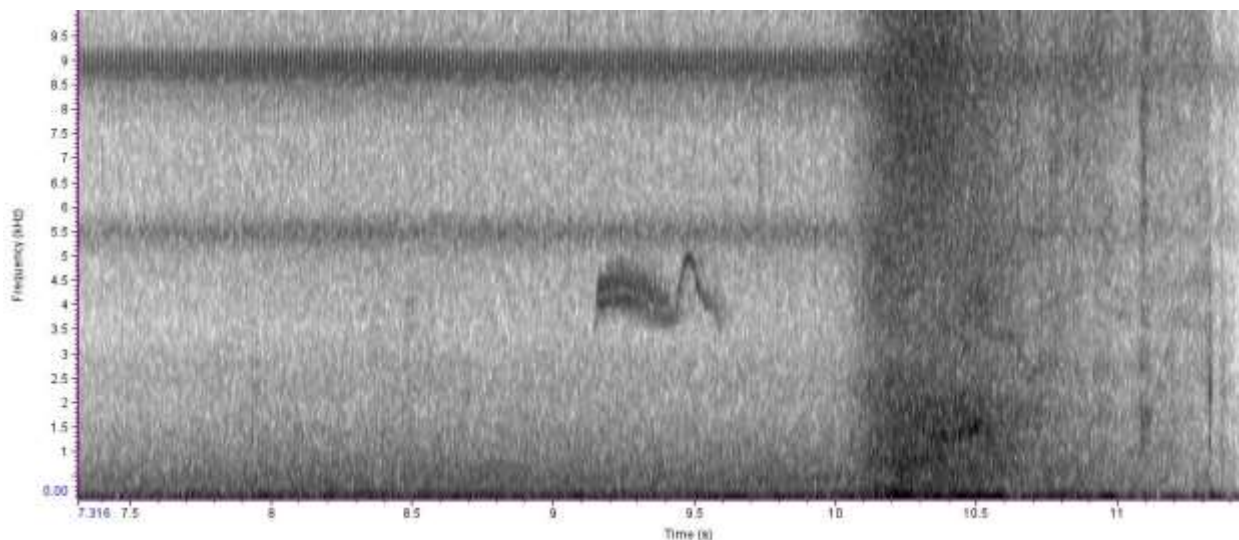
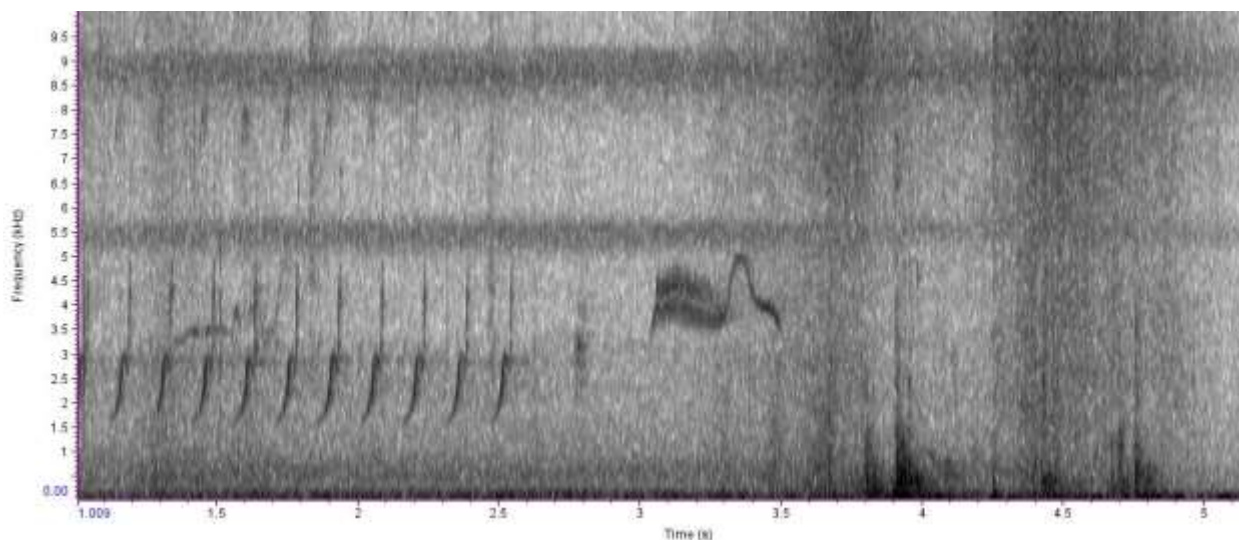
[wwpe22conover2.mp3](#)

Short isolated call from 10:14 mark of the -1005.wav file below, with the signal amplified using Audacity sound editor.

[Conover WWPE 8.39 10.14 10.31 11.20 x2022-05-22 1005.wav](#)

Four isolated calls edited into a short clip by Robert C. Dobbs. Some amplification added. Calls taken from the 8:39\*, 10:14\*, 10:31, and 11:20 marks of the -1005.wav file below

**\*Spectrographs of vocalizations from the 8:39 and 10:14 marks, created by Robert C. Dobbs:**



## Full Original Merlin Clips

[x2022-05-22 1005.wav](#)

Merlin says WWPE at 7:18, 7:29, 7:45, 7:51, 8:27, 8:37, 9:23, 9:27, 9:32, 9:38, 9:47, 9:56, 10:04, 10:12, 10:18, 10:28, 10:35, 10:41, 10:58, 11:06, 11:15, 11:24

[x2022-05-22 1059.wav](#)

says at 2:19

[x2022-05-22 1104.wav](#)

says at 1:48,1:54, 2:01, 2:18

[x2022-05-22 1111.wav](#)

says at 2:59, 3:04

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): Eastern Wood-Pewee in this case will only be separable based on recording vocalizations.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Photos and audio. Silhouetted photos had to be adjusted to lighten image.

19. Previous experience with this species: Yes, in Louisiana and on the breeding range.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation:

b. after observation:

21. This description is written from:

<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made during the observation.	Are notes attached?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made after the observation.	At what date?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	memory		
<input type="checkbox"/>	study of images		

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain:

Yes. Given my hearing weakness and the difficulty of pewee ID, I was reluctant to place much faith in this sighting despite the triangulation of 1.) believing I had heard a WWPE, 2.) the presence of a pewee that matched WWPE phenotypically, and 3.) the repeated claims of WWPE by Merlin. That explains the delay of > 1 year in submitting the report. However, after receiving positive feedback on the Merlin recordings from Chris Brantley and David Muth I made a concentrated effort to listen for WWPE and I can hear vocalizations that appear to be distinctive WWPE calls. The sound file and spectrographs created by Rob Dobbs further convinced me.

23. Date: last edited 1 July 2023



















