

DUSKY FLYCATCHER BREEDING IN THE PEACE RIVER REGION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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The Dusky Flycatcher (*Empidonax oberholseri*) is widely distributed throughout the central interior of British Columbia south of the Bulkley Basin near Smithers and the Fraser-Nechako region near Prince George (Campbell et al. 1997). It is considered a vagrant along the coast and locally rare in the northern interior of the province. Phinney (1998) lists a single record for the Dawson Creek area. There are an additional 10 widely scattered records for the remainder of



Figure 1. Dusky Flycatcher nest and eggs, 3 km northwest of Gwillim Lake, BC. 17 July 2003 (R. Wayne Campbell).

the northern interior over the past 117 years. There is only one breeding record, of adults with fledged young, from the Fort Nelson area (Campbell et al. 1997).

During summer fieldwork in June and July 2003 between Hudson's Hope and Tumbler Ridge I discovered two active nests of the Dusky Flycatcher. Both nests were associated with brushy areas and thickets in transmission corridors. The first nest was located near Gwillim Lake (45 km south of Chetwynd) on 16 July. It was built in the crotch of a high-bush cranberry (*Viburnum edule*) 0.7 m from the ground and contained three eggs. On 21 July it contained three two-day old nestlings being attended by an adult.

The second nest was located 17.5 km west of Hudson's Hope and was built in the crotch of a moose-browsed high willow (*Salix* sp.) 2.0 m from the ground. On 28 July it contained two eggs and two nestlings. Both nests were flimsy structures of coarse and fine grasses and willow fluff.

Most eggs of the Dusky Flycatcher are a dull creamy white without markings (Bent 1942). Both clutches in northeastern British Columbia, however, had small light brown spots (Figure 1). Bowles and Decker (1927) mention that most eggs are unmarked but "not infrequently" they may be dotted with light brown. Some eggs are "rarely" with brownish flecks" (Sedgwick 1993).

The breeding range of the Dusky Flycatcher in British Columbia, north of the Fraser-Nechako region, likely extends in suitable habitat through the central interior in a northwesterly direction towards the southwestern Yukon Territory.

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About the Author

Doug is an experienced field naturalist who has worked in the logging and fruit industry and currently as a wildlife consultant. His interests have taken him to remote areas of the province where others rarely dare to venture.