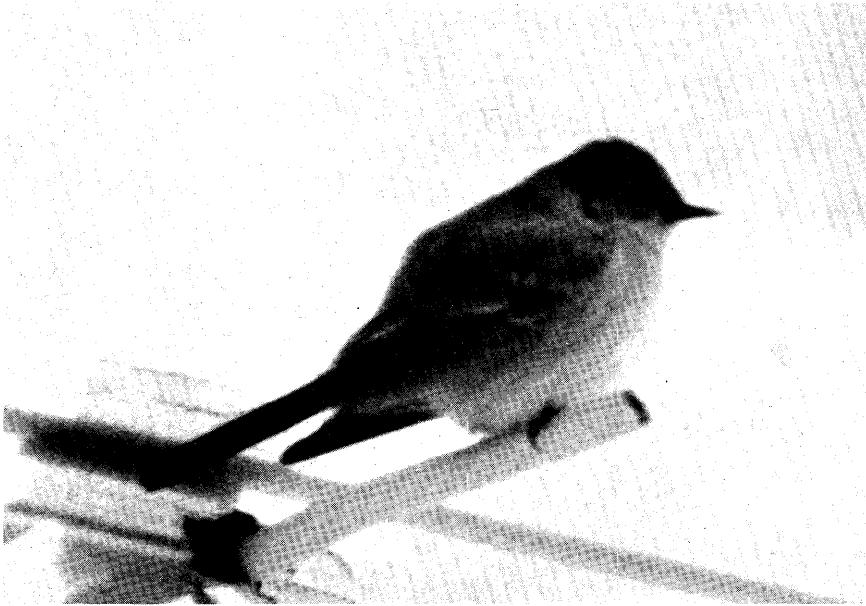


PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES
43. SAY'S PHOEBE

DOROTHY W. CRUMB



Say's Phoebe – Marcellus, Onondaga County
November 1981 *Dorothy Crumb*

The normal range of Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) is west of the Mississippi River from Alaska to Mexico. On 8 November 1981, John Weeks discovered a Say's Phoebe catching flies at a renovated farm house which had recently become the headquarters for Centers for Nature Education in Marcellus, Onondaga Co. The house had been unheated for some time and the new warmth caused the hatching of large numbers of Buckwheat or Cluster Flies (*Pollenia rudis*). The phoebe was very adept at catching the flies in midair, or probing for them at edges of shingles.

The Say's Phoebe roosted in the open barn or one of the out-buildings on the property. It could be seen or heard early in the

morning or late afternoon. During the day it wandered throughout the farming community, visiting various fields and farms for other food. Some days it stayed on the nature center property.

On 18 December 1981 the phoebe flew into the house through an open door and fed on Buckwheat Flies inside the building. It was found dead the next day and, according to John Bull, apparently died of starvation in our cold northern winter. The specimen is now at the American Museum of Natural History, AMNH 824924.

There are two previous specimens of Say's Phoebe from New York State:

(1) Male collected at Montauk, Suffolk Co. 9 October 1933 (Latham), NYSM 25522. (Bull, 1974).

(2) A bird that died soon after being found near Ithaca, Tompkins Co. 13 December 1977. The specimen was deposited in the Cornell University Museum, but cannot be located at this writing (McIlroy, 1978).

There are three Long Island observations and one from Monroe Co. believed correct (Bull, 1974):

(1) Dyker Beach, Kings Co., 25-28 September 1926 (W. Eaton and Nathan);

(2) Gilgo Beach, Suffolk Co., 16 September 1958 (Buckley and Restivo);

(3) Greece, Monroe Co., 13-19 December 1959 (Listman and Lloyd);

(4) Point O'Woods, Fire Island, Suffolk Co., 12 October 1969 (S. Hopkins).

LITERATURE CITED

- Bull, John. 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City, NY.
- McIlroy, D.W. 1978. *The Kingbird*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2. Region 3—Finger Lakes.

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