

FEATURE ARTICLES

PREBASIC MOLT AND MOLT-RELATED MOVEMENTS IN ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHERS

LUKE K. BUTLER¹, SIEVERT ROHWER, AND MICHELLE ROGERS

Department of Biology and Burke Museum, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98105

Manuscript received 20 September 2005; accepted 16 February 2006.

¹ Present address: Department of Biology, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155. E-mail: luke.butler@tufts.edu

Abstract. We describe the timing and location of the prebasic molt in the Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), a hawking insectivore with resident populations in Mexico and migrant populations that breed in the western United States. The timing of fall molt with respect to migration is of particular interest for Ash-throated Flycatchers from the United States because they breed in arid lowland habitats that are probably unproductive in late summer, and because time constraints on molt might force northern populations to leave their breeding grounds before molting. Adults and juveniles depart their breeding grounds to arrive and molt in the region of the Mexican monsoon shortly after the monsoon rains begin. Diminishing food on the breeding grounds and increasing food in the monsoon region seem more important than time constraints for explaining molt-related movements by northern populations, because more southerly breeding birds east and west of the monsoon region also move to the monsoon region to molt. We found age class differences in the timing and duration of molt. In adults the primary molt starts approximately 14 July and requires 76 days to complete, whereas in juveniles, primary molt starts approximately 1 August (18 days after adults) but requires only 50 days to complete. We found no evidence that juveniles molt more primaries simultaneously than adults, so we conclude that the daily growth rate of individual feathers must be higher in juveniles than adults.

Key words: Mexican monsoon, migration, molt, *Myiarchus cinerascens*.