

## **Mexican Chickadee (*Poecile sclateri*)**

NMPIF level: Biodiversity Conservation Concern, Level 2 (BC2)

NMPIF assessment score: 14

NM stewardship responsibility: Low

National PIF status: No special status

New Mexico BCRs: 34, 35

Primary breeding habitat(s): Mixed Conifer Forest (Animas Mountains only)

Other habitats used: Ponderosa Pine Forest, Madrean Pine-Oak Woodland

### **Summary of Concern**

Mexican Chickadee is a Mexican forest species present in the state only in the Animas Mountains. It is considered vulnerable in New Mexico because of its small population size and restricted distribution.

### **Associated Species**

Flammulated Owl (SC1), Band-tailed Pigeon (SC2), Broad-tailed Hummingbird (SC2), Acorn Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Cordilleran Flycatcher (SC2), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red-faced Warbler (SC1), Painted Redstart (BC2), Yellow-eyed Junco (BC1)

### **Distribution**

Mexican Chickadee is a montane species of central and northern Mexico, present in the Sierra Madre Occidental, Sierra Madre del Sur, and the Central Volcanic Belt. It has a very limited United States distribution in southwest New Mexico and southeast Arizona.

In New Mexico, this species breeds in the Animas Mountains. It has also been seen in the Peloncillo Mountains, primarily in winter (Ficken and Nosedal 1992, Parmeter et al. 2002).

### **Ecology and Habitat Requirements**

In the southwest (primarily in the Chiricahua Mountains), Mexican Chickadees occur in ponderosa pine and mixed conifer habitat. In the Animas Mountains, New Mexico, and in Mexico, the species uses a greater variety of forest types, including pine-oak woodlands. In the Chiricahuas, favored mid-elevation habitat consists of open, park-like ponderosa stands with few second-growth trees. At higher elevations in the Chiricahuas, forest habitat is denser and dominated by Douglas-fir with Engelmann spruce. Mexican Chickadees nest in natural or excavated cavities. Four nests in the Chiricahuas were high (30-50 feet) in ponderosa pines. A single, fairly large (5-9 eggs) clutch is raised. In winter, Mexican Chickadees join mixed species flocks and may forage at lower elevations (Ficken and Nosedal 1992).

**Conservation Status**

**Species Assessment**

DISTRIBUTION	4
THREATS	3
GLOBAL POPULATION SIZE	3
LOCAL POPULATION TREND	3
IMPORTANCE OF NEW MEXICO TO BREEDING	1
<b>COMBINED SCORE</b>	<b>14</b>

Mexican Chickadee is a Biodiversity Conservation Concern, Level 2 species for New Mexico, with a total assessment score of 14. At the continental level, it receives a high PIF vulnerability score of 4 for its relatively small distributional range.

**Population Size**

PIF estimates a species population of 2 million, less than 1% of which occurs in the United States. The species is more numerous in Arizona than New Mexico. Densities in the Chiricahua Mountains were approximately 1.7 pairs/10 ha in ponderosa pine habitat, and 6.4 pairs/10 ha in spruce-fir habitat (Balda 1967). Habitat in the Animas Mountains was estimated at about 1,900 ha (Ficken and Nosedal 1992). Using density estimates from the Chiricahuas and taking into account generally lower elevations and drier conditions, the Animas Mountains population may consist of 200-300 breeding pairs. This may be a sink population maintained by migrants arriving from the Sierra Madre Occidental.

## **Population Trend**

This species is not sampled by BBS. Little information on population trends in New Mexico or elsewhere is available. NMPIF assigns a score of 3 for local population trend, indicating uncertainty.

## **Threats**

The New Mexico population is vulnerable due to its small size and restriction to a single mountain range. Habitat in the Animas Mountains is not considered to be highly threatened, but may be vulnerable to catastrophic fire.

## **Management Issues and Recommendations**

No special management is needed at this time.

## **NMPIF Recommendations**

- Seek to maintain healthy ponderosa pine and mixed-conifer forest habitat in the Animas Mountains, and to reduce risk of catastrophic fire.

## **Species Conservation Objectives**

### **NMPIF Objectives**

- Seek to establish monitoring to better assess species status in New Mexico.
- Maintain current populations.

## **Sources of Information**

Balda, R. P. 1967. Ecological relationships of the breeding birds of the Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona. Ph.D. Diss., Univ. Illinois, Urbana, IL.

Ficken, M., and J. Nicedal. 1992. Mexican Chickadee. *In* The Birds of North America, No. 8 (A. Poole, P. Stettenheim, and F. Gill, Eds.). Philadelphia, PA: The Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington, DC: The American Ornithologists' Union.

Parmeter, J., B. Neville, and D. Emkalns. 2002. New Mexico Bird Finding Guide. New Mexico Ornithological Society, Albuquerque, NM.