

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)

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

NMPIF assessment score: 13

National PIF status: Watch List

New Mexico BCRs: 16, 34, 35

Primary breeding habitat(s): Mixed Conifer Forest

Other habitats used: Spruce-Fir Forest, Ponderosa Pine Forest

Summary of Concern

Olive-sided Flycatcher is a broadly distributed species of North American forests that has experienced large population declines across much of its breeding range. Reasons for these large-scale declines are not well understood. Although it is a state concern species in New Mexico, at the southern edge of its breeding range, it is elsewhere considered a species of general conservation concern.

Associated Species

Sharp-shinned Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon (SC2), Flammulated Owl (SC1), Broad-tailed Hummingbird (SC2), Williamson's Sapsucker (SC2), Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin

Distribution

Olive-sided Flycatcher is a broadly distributed boreal species, breeding in a wide arc from northwest Alaska to the northeastern United States and far eastern Canada. In the west, the breeding distribution follows the major mountain ranges south to southern California and central Arizona and New Mexico. This species is a long-distance migrant, wintering in Panama and the Andes of South America (Altman and Sallabanks 2000).

In New Mexico, Olive-sided Flycatchers breed primarily in the northern and central mountains, extending south as far as the Mogollon and Sacramento ranges (Parmeter et al. 2002). Thus, although the species is at the southern edge of its breeding distribution, it is present in three of New Mexico's four BCRs.

Ecology and Habitat Requirements

Olive-sided Flycatcher is associated with openings and edges in coniferous forest habitat. In the west, it is generally more abundant in mixed conifer, late-successional forest with less than 40% canopy cover (Verner 1980). The species may also be present in early-successional habitats where residual snags or live trees provide foraging and singing perches. On a landscape scale, Olive-sided Flycatchers are typically most abundant in fragmented, selectively logged, or recovering burn or clear-cut areas (Altman and Sallabanks 2000). In Arizona, highest densities were reached 3-4 years following burns (Lowe et al. 1978, Overturf 1979). In the White Mountains of Arizona, the species was significantly more abundant in mixed conifer stands subjected to selective overstory removal than in unharvested stands (Franzreb 1977, Franzreb and Ohmart 1978).

Olive-sided Flycatchers arrive on their New Mexico breeding grounds by early May, with most breeding activity occurring in June and July. Nests are most frequently placed in the top half of conifers, on horizontal branches far from the trunk. Lower nests are sometimes placed in deciduous riparian vegetation or Gambel oak. A single clutch of 3-4 eggs is raised, but the species will re-nest if the first attempt fails. This species may exhibit strong breeding site fidelity (Altman and Sallabanks 2000). Olive-sided Flycatchers forage from high perches for flying insects, particularly bees.

Conservation Status

Species Assessment

DISTRIBUTION	2
THREATS	4
GLOBAL POPULATION SIZE	3
LOCAL POPULATION TREND	3
IMPORTANCE OF NEW MEXICO TO BREEDING	1
COMBINED SCORE	13

Olive-sided Flycatcher is a Biodiversity Conservation Concern, Level 2 species for New Mexico, with a combined vulnerability score of 13. Olive-sided Flycatcher is a national PIF Watch List Species; it receives a high vulnerability score of 4 for threats to non-breeding areas. Olive-sided Flycatcher is a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2002) national Bird of Conservation Concern.

Population Size

PIF estimates a species population of 1.2 million, and that New Mexico holds less than 1% of the species population, or about 3,600 birds. Highest densities are in California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

Population Trend

BBS data have shown widespread declines of this species across much of its breeding range, worsening since the 1980s. In Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico, populations appear to be more stable, but numbers are relatively small in this area and BBS data are limited. BBS data for 1966-2004 are:

	Annual Trend (%)	P-value	Number of Routes
New Mexico	2.3	0.69	8
FWS Region 2	3.3	0.47	18
Western States	-3.3	0.00	506

Threats

Reasons for large-scale declines are not well understood, particularly given this species' affinity for cleared or fragmented forest habitat. Some research suggests that harvested forest habitat, while superficially resembling post-burn habitat and hence attracting flycatchers, may have other characteristics that limit productivity (Hutto 1995, Altman and Sallabanks 2000). The species may also be suffering from habitat loss on its wintering grounds.

Management Issues and Recommendations

Management for Olive-sided Flycatcher in New Mexico should focus on maintaining patches of early-successional habitat within the larger forest matrix, and preserving key structural elements in burned or harvested areas.

NMPIF Recommendations

- Manage mixed conifer forest to provide a matrix of open areas and edge habitat.

- Maintain snags after burns and/or during timber operations, especially on the edges of forest openings.
- Maintain trees which stand above the average height of conifer forest canopy.

Species Conservation Objectives

PIF Objectives

The PIF North American Landbird Conservation Plan places Olive-sided Flycatcher in the conservation action category Management, and sets a continental population objective of doubling the current population over the next 30 years.

NMPIF Objectives

- Maintain presence in two-square-mile patches of suitable habitat in the mountain ranges of the Colorado Plateau and Southern Rocky Mountains.
- Maintain presence in the northern ranges of the Mogollon Rim.
- Overall, maintain or increase the current breeding population.

Sources of Information

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