



United States Department of the Interior

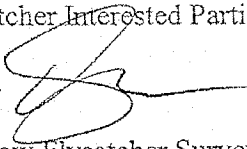
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103
<http://ifw2es.fws.gov>

In Reply Refer To:
R2/ES-TE
CL 05-31

MAY 19 2004

Memorandum

To: Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Interested Parties, Region 1, 2 and 6
From: ^{ACTING} Regional Director, Region 2 
Subject: Updated Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Survey Forms

As the lead U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region for the federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), the Arizona Ecological Services Office (AESO) solicited input from State and Federal biologists maintaining state and range-wide flycatcher databases, in order to update the survey reporting form.

The new reporting form has been improved to include entries for datum, willow flycatcher UTM coordinates, and Federal and State permit numbers and should replace the forms currently found attached to the survey protocol. The revised form also requests that all surveys include habitat photographs and describe any unique habitat features. Additional copies of the survey reporting form and protocol and 2000 protocol update can be found at <http://www.usgs.nau.edu/swwf> or through a link from AESO flycatcher web page <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/southwes.htm>. Please use this form for reporting in 2004 and future years until other updates occur.

We would like to extend our appreciation to those conducting flycatcher surveys for their hard work in generating the information that goes into these forms and for submitting them in a timely manner. The results of these surveys and the databases maintained are the backbone of southwestern willow flycatcher recovery.

Attachment: (Flycatcher survey form)

cc: Regional Director, Region 1
Regional Director, Region 6
Threatened and Endangered Species Coordinator, Region 1, Portland, OR

Willow Flycatcher Survey and Detection Form (revised April, 2004)

Site Name _____ State _____ County _____
 USGS Quad Name _____ Elevation _____ feet / meters (circle one)

Is copy of USGS map marked with survey area and WIFL sightings attached (as required)? Yes No

Site Coordinates: Start: N _____ E _____ UTM Datum _____ (NAD27 preferred)
 Stop: N _____ E _____ UTM Zone _____

**** Fill in additional site information on back of this page ****

Survey #	Date (m/d/y) Survey time	Number of Adult WIFLs	Estimated Number of Pairs	Estimated Number of Territories	Nest(s) Found? Y or N	Cowbirds Detected? Y or N	Presence of Livestock, Recent sign, If Yes, Describe Y or N	Comments about this survey (e.g., bird behavior, evidence of pairs or breeding, number of nests, nest contents or number of fledges seen; potential threats)
1 _____ _____ _____ _____	Date _____ Start _____ Stop _____ Total hrs _____							
2 _____ _____ _____ _____	Date _____ Start _____ Stop _____ Total hrs _____							
3 _____ _____ _____ _____	Date _____ Start _____ Stop _____ Total hrs _____							
4 _____ _____ _____ _____	Date _____ Start _____ Stop _____ Total hrs _____							
5 _____ _____ _____ _____	Date _____ Start _____ Stop _____ Total hrs _____							
Overall Site Summary (Total resident WIFLs only)		Adults	Pairs	Territories	Nests	Were any WIFLs color-banded? Yes No If yes, report color combination(s) in the comments section on back of form		
Total survey hrs _____								

Reporting Individual _____ Date Report Completed _____
 US Fish and Wildlife Service Permit # _____ AZ Game and Fish Department (or other state) Permit # _____

Submit original form by August 1st. Retain a copy for your records.

Fill in the following information completely. Submit original form by August 1st. Retain a copy for your records.

Reporting Individual _____ Phone # _____
 Affiliation _____ E-mail _____
 Site Name _____ Date Report Completed _____

Did you verify that this site name is consistent with that used in previous years? Yes / No (circle one)
 If name is different, what name(s) was used in the past? _____
 If site was surveyed last year, did you survey the same general area this year? Yes / No If no, summarize in comments below.
 Did you survey the same general area during each visit to this site this year? Yes / No If no, summarize in comments below.

Management Authority for Survey Area (circle one): Federal Municipal/County State Tribal Private
 Name of Management Entity or Owner (e.g., Tonto National Forest) _____

Length of area surveyed: _____ (specify units, e.g., miles = mi, kilometers = km, meters = m)

Vegetation Characteristics: Overall, are the species in tree/shrub layer at this site comprised predominantly of (check one):

- Native broadleaf plants (entirely or almost entirely, includes high-elevation willow)
- Mixed native and exotic plants (mostly native)
- Mixed native and exotic plants (mostly exotic)
- Exotic/introduced plants (entirely or almost entirely)

Identify the 2-3 predominant tree/shrub species: _____

Average height of canopy (Do not put a range): _____ (specify units)

Was surface water or saturated soil present at or adjacent to site? Yes / No (circle one)
 Distance from the site to surface water or saturated soil: _____ (specify units)

Did hydrological conditions change significantly among visits (did the site flood or dry out)? Yes / No (circle one)
 If yes, describe in comments section below.

Remember to attach a copy of a USGS quad/topographical map (REQUIRED) of the survey area, outlining the survey site and location of WIFL detections. Also include a sketch or aerial photograph showing details of site location, patch shape, survey route in relation to patch, and location of any willow flycatchers or willow flycatcher nests detected. Such sketches or photographs are welcomed, but DO NOT substitute for the required USGS quad map. Please include photos of the interior of the patch, exterior of the patch, and overall site and describe any unique habitat features.

Comments (attach additional sheets if necessary)

WIFL Detection Locations:

Date Detected	N UTM	E UTM	Date Detected	N UTM	E UTM



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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

P.O. Box 1306

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103

MAY 31 2001

In Reply Refer To:
R2/ES-TE

Dear Southwestern willow flycatcher surveyors:

The Fish and Wildlife Service has revised the survey protocol for the southwestern willow flycatcher throughout the bird's range in all western states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas).

The enclosed revision separates the methodology for general surveys from those which are done to evaluate the effects of a project on flycatchers. As a result, general surveys will still follow the minimum three survey effort (Sogge et al. 1997). For project-related surveys, plan to do a minimum of five visits in order to have greater confidence in determining the presence/absence of resident southwestern willow flycatchers. If there is uncertainty over which type of survey is appropriate or if surveys are needed, please contact your local Fish and Wildlife Service office.

This revision does not replace Sogge et al. 1997. It is still essential for surveyors to be familiar with this document (especially survey methodology) since it covers a wide range of flycatcher topics (natural history, habitat, permitting, etc.). The revision simply adds a new layer to the already existing protocol. As in the past, all new surveyors will still need to attend flycatcher training before they can receive a Federal permit to survey for flycatchers.

We recognize that some environmental consultants may have already established contracts for flycatcher surveys this upcoming field season. Therefore, those completed contracts will not need to be altered for this revision. However, any new contracts developed following distribution of this correspondence will be expected to use the protocol revision.

If there are any questions about the revision, please contact Greg Beatty in our Arizona Ecological Services office in Phoenix, Arizona, at 602-640-2722 extension 247, or your local Fish and Wildlife Service office.

Sincerely,

[signed Bryan Arroyo]

Assistant Regional Director - Ecological Services

Enclosure

SOUTHWESTERN WILLOW FLYCATCHER PROTOCOL REVISION 2000

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is revising the survey protocol for the southwestern willow flycatcher due to issues raised (Braden and McKernan 1998, 1999, Sogge et al. 1997, 1999), discussion with experts in the field, and subsequent review of pertinent documents by the Ornithological Council. The number and timing of surveys recommended in Sogge et al. (1997) (e.g., a minimum three surveys), are appropriate for general surveys and situations where the survey results will NOT be used to evaluate the effects of a project. However, surveyors will now need to be prepared to make at least five visits to evaluate project effects on flycatchers (e.g., typically those that would involve consultation with the USFWS). The purpose of these additional surveys is to provide greater confidence in determining resident southwestern flycatcher presence/absence and direct limited resources to where they can be most beneficial. Thus, what was once a single approach for all survey purposes has been changed to a two-strategy system; for general purposes, surveyors will need to conduct a minimum of three surveys, and in order to assess project-related impacts, surveyors will need to be prepared to conduct a minimum of five surveys.

ALL SURVEYS

Although the USFWS is modifying the recommended minimum number of survey visits to evaluate project effects to flycatchers, all surveys conducted should follow the general guidelines described in Sogge et al. (1997). This includes the use of tape-playback, thorough coverage of survey sites on ALL visits, ways to minimize impacts to the habitat, importance of recognizing all flycatcher vocalizations, importance of beginning surveys at dawn, etc.

Early-season visits in May and June (needed for both survey strategies) allow surveyors to look for flycatchers when they are most vocal. During these visits, surveyors using taped calls can elicit vocal responses from flycatchers, and subsequently observe behaviors that indicate nesting (e.g., establishing and defending territories, soliciting mates, acquiring/carrying nest material, etc.). These early visits also increase the surveyor's familiarity with the site (e.g., learning vegetation types, topography, etc.), and if birds are located, help the surveyor focus on specific areas within a site where the resident southwestern willow flycatchers might be found during the third survey period (and therefore where to devote extra survey attention).

During ALL visits, surveyors should observe and record flycatcher behavior such as territorial defense, pair status, carrying nest material, feeding fledged young, etc. Surveyors should spend additional time either during or after the survey to observe and document pair behavior and status (while being careful to not disturb the birds). Neither survey method is limited to three or five visits. Searches of large or particularly dense areas may take more than one day to complete a "single" survey of the area (depending on start time, number of surveyors, etc.). Or possibly, some surveyors may want to make extra visits to confirm an observation. It is important that all survey information be recorded on your survey forms (in Sogge et al. 1997) and submitted to your local USFWS or State wildlife agency as specified in your permit.

The survey efforts described in Sogge et al. (1997) and modified herein relate only to presence/absence type surveys. Efforts such as nest monitoring require different techniques, and more extensive effort, experience, and permitting. The permit to survey for willow flycatchers does not authorize surveyors to directly monitor or search for nests. Both State and Federal permits are required for these activities because they are more invasive and require more experience. We recognize that surveyors may discover nests while trying to detect birds. In these instances, surveyors should place themselves at a distance where birds are not disturbed, quickly determine the status of the nest with binoculars, map the location, leave the immediate area, and contact your local State or Federal wildlife agency with this information as soon as possible.

GENERAL SURVEYS

The minimum three survey effort described in Sogge et al. (1997) is appropriate for conducting general willow flycatcher surveys, but should NOT be used to help assess impacts of a specific project. When using the minimum three survey methodology, the flexibility exists to conduct more than three surveys in order to be more certain about the presence/absence, breeding status, home range, absence, etc. of resident southwestern willow flycatchers. This might especially be worthwhile if flycatchers are detected during periods one and two, and/or based on the confidence/experience of the surveyor. If a surveyor has more time, it may best be applied by conducting more surveys during period three.

PROJECT-RELATED SURVEYS

Surveyors need to plan to make at least three visits during the third (or last) survey period (June 22 to July 17), because: (a) nesting southwestern willow flycatchers can be more difficult to detect once breeding efforts are well underway (e.g., the third survey period), compared to earlier in the breeding season; (b) detections during the third period are the "verification" that flycatchers are resident, lacking other evidence of local breeding; and (c), the potentially high conservation ramifications of incorrectly determining that flycatchers are not resident at a project-related site. Detecting southwestern willow flycatchers during the last survey period can be difficult because birds are less vocal and less likely to respond (especially with singing) to playback calls. Conducting more visits during this survey period provides greater confidence in determining the presence/absence of resident southwestern willow flycatchers, and can generate more information about nesting behaviors, number of pairs, and other related information.

MODIFIED SURVEY GUIDELINES: TIMING AND NUMBER OF VISITS

Survey schedule

1st survey period.

May 15 to May 31. *Minimum* one survey.

2nd survey period.

June 1 to June 21. *Minimum* one survey.

3rd survey period.

June 22 to July 17 (this period is extended one week longer than per Sogge et al. 1997).

For general surveys - *Minimum* one survey.

For project-related surveys - Plan to conduct a *minimum* of three surveys, each at least five days apart.

GUIDELINES FOR THE REVISED PROTOCOL FOR PROJECT -RELATED SURVEYS

- 1) Surveyors must be familiar with and adhere to the general survey techniques and guidelines in Sogge et al. (1997). Flycatcher survey training must be completed prior to being permitted to conduct surveys. Please follow all reporting requirements described in your permits such as contacting agencies when nests are discovered or submitting survey forms at the end of the season.
- 2) For project-related surveys, visits in the third period are recommended until flycatchers are found, or until three visits are completed with no flycatcher detections. If birds are found on either the first or second survey within the last survey period (visit 3 or 4), we recommend that surveyors continue to complete all five surveys, especially if pair status could not be determined in earlier visits.
- 3) Surveys conducted in different survey periods, and multiple surveys within the third survey period, must be at least FIVE days apart from each other.
- 4) Conduct the initial survey in period three between June 22 and June 30. Because surveys must be at least five days apart and there are just 27 days in the last survey period, it is important that surveys begin as soon as possible.
- 5) Detecting flycatchers in the third survey period can confirm resident status. Additionally, behaviors observed and recorded on survey forms throughout the survey period can help determine number of pairs, nesting status, etc. Surveyors should spend time either during or after surveys to observe and document flycatcher behavior (without directly monitoring nests or disturbing bird behavior).
- 6) Flycatchers could be considered as migrants or absent if birds are not detected during the last survey period. Yet, it may be possible for early-season nests to fail by late June, and the flycatchers not be detected in the last survey period. As a result, observing and reporting behavior of flycatchers in the first two survey periods is important in determining resident southwestern willow flycatcher status.

- 7) State and Federal permits are required to search for and monitor nesting flycatchers. Contact your State or Federal wildlife agency for more information on methodology. For example, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has produced a report (Rourke et al. 1999) that specifically describes how to monitor southwestern willow flycatcher nests. The applicant is responsible for having all applicable State and Federal permits prior to conducting flycatcher survey, monitoring, and management activities.

LITERATURE CITED

- Braden, G.T. and R.L. McKernan. 1998. Nest cycles, vocalizations, and survey protocols of the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. Report to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Boulder City, Nevada. San Bernardino County Museum, Redlands, CA.
- Braden, G.T. and R.L. McKernan. 1999. Rebuttal to the criticism of Sogge et al. (1999) concerning the proposed survey protocol for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. Report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico. San Bernardino County Museum, Redlands, CA.
- Rourke, J.W., T.D. McCarthy, R.F. Davidson, and A.M. Santaniello. 1999. Southwestern willow flycatcher nest monitoring protocol. Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program Technical Report 144. Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, Arizona.
- Sogge, M.K., R.M. Marshall, S.J. Sferra, and T.J. Tibbitts. 1997. A Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Natural History Summary and Survey Protocol. Technical Report NPS/NAUCPRS/NRTR-97/12. USGS Colorado Plateau Research Station, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona.
- Sogge, M.K., R.M. Marshall, S.J. Sferra, and T.J. Tibbitts. 1999. Preliminary evaluation of the effectiveness of the southwestern willow flycatcher survey protocol (Sogge et al. 1997). A briefing statement to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Ecological Services Office, Phoenix, AZ.