

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER

Empidonax difficilis

Family: TYRANNIDAE

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

B320

Written by: T. Kucera, 1997

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Former western flycatcher recently split into Pacific-slope flycatcher, which occurs in cismontane California and cordilleran flycatcher (*E. difficilis*), which breeds in transmontane California chiefly in the Warner Mts. area (American Ornithologists' Union 1989). Contact zone between the two species is at Shovel Creek, Ikes Creek, and Little Shasta River, Siskiyou Co (Johnson 1980). Pacific-slope flycatcher is a widespread, fairly common summer resident in warm moist woodlands, including valley foothill and montane riparian, coastal and blue oak woodlands, and montane hardwood-conifer habitats. Also uses closed-cone pine-cypress, ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, Sierra mixed conifer, and redwood habitats, and others. Breeds in the south in moist canyon bottoms from the coast to lower reaches of mountain ranges west of the deserts. Occurs in similar moist woodland and forest habitats to the north on the coast and on lower western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, Cascades, and on other interior mountain ranges (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Mostly eat flying insects; usually hawk from a perch, sometimes glean from foliage. Occasionally eat berries and seeds (Bent 1942).

Cover: Breeding habitat provided by shady alder and willow thickets and similar riparian growth in oak woodlands, redwood, and ponderosa pine forests, and others. In migration not so closely tied to riparian areas, but still prefer shaded woodlands.

Reproduction: Nest often built near water in crotch of tree, on cliff ledge, in old building, or on other human made structure. Nest usually in shade 0-9 m (0-30 ft) above ground (Bent 1942).

Water: Closely tied for breeding to riparian or moist areas, usually near water, throughout the state.

Pattern: Frequent woodlands and forests with dense canopy near water during breeding season. Occur in more open habitats in migration.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Arrive in California in mid-March from Mexico (Bent 1942). Fairly common to common from spring through fall. In summer, restricted to riparian and other moist breeding sites. Adults migrate south sooner than juveniles (Johnson 1973). By late October most individuals have left the state. A few Pacific-slope flycatchers winter in coastal southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981), and occasionally found near the coast and in the interior in northern California

(McCaskie et al. 1979, 1988).

Home Range: No data found. Density of individuals per 40 ha (100 ac) recorded as: 5-28 in a Colorado conifer forest (Beaver and Baldwin 1975), 11 males in a broadleaf evergreen forest in Alameda Co. (Cogswell 1973), 35 males in a California buckeye/California bay mixed forest in Marin Co. (Stewart 1973).

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: Nest from May to August with peak activity in June. Nest solitarily. Lay 2-5 eggs; average 3-4. May raise 2 broods per yr. Incubation 14-15 days, by female; altricial young fledge at 14-18 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Eggs and nestlings preyed upon by small mammals and snakes. Adults may be taken by accipiters.

Comments: Recent species split based upon range separation, vocalization, and genetic differences (American Ornithologists' Union 1989). Other differences between Pacific slope and cordilleran flycatchers in requirements and life history not yet documented.

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