

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

VERMILION FLYCATCHER

Pyrocephalus rubinus

Family: TYRANNIDAE
B324

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A rare, local, yearlong resident along the Colorado River, especially in vicinity of Blythe, Riverside Co. Nesters inhabit cottonwood, willow, mesquite, and other vegetation in desert riparian habitat adjacent to irrigated fields, irrigation ditches, pastures and other open, mesic areas in isolated patches throughout central southern California. Numbers have declined drastically in the Imperial and Coachella valleys and along the Colorado River, primarily because of loss of habitat (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Gaines 1977c, Remsen 1978, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Despite local extirpations in the Coachella and Imperial valleys, the overall breeding range has expanded in recent years to the north and west (Myers 2008).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Sallies for flying insects, especially bees, from exposed perches on outer portions of low trees, shrubs, and tall herb stalks, or picks insects from ground. Frequently feeds just above water surface. Regurgitates pellets (Bent 1942).

Cover: Trees and large shrubs afford nesting and roosting sites, and other cover.

Reproduction: Nest a compact, open cup of twigs, fine grasses, rootlets, bound with spider silk. Built in the fork of a horizontal branch in willow, cottonwood, mesquite, or other large tree or shrub. Nest height generally 2.5 to 6.2 m (8-20 ft), rarely to 15.5 m (50 ft) above ground (Bent 1942, Tinkham 1949).

Water: Breeds and forages near water (Grinnell and Miller 1944), typically irrigated fields, ditches, ponds, sloughs. Water probably essential.

Pattern: Most numerous where riparian thickets edge on open, mesic habitats.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Apparently mostly a resident, but probably withdraws from Mojave Desert oases in severe winters.

Home Range: No information found.

Territory: No information found.

Reproduction: Monogamous; peak of egg-laying probably April and May. Incubation, by

female, 14-15 days. Clutch averages 3 eggs (range 2-4); often raises 2 broods. Both sexes care for altricial young. Fledging age 14-16 days (Bent 1942, Taylor and Hanson 1970).

Niche: Uncommon host to brown-headed cowbird nest parasitism; one record as host to bronzed cowbird (Friedmann 1963).

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