

Work Task C51: Vermilion Flycatcher Detectability and Distribution Study

FY12 Estimate	FY12 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY12	FY13 Approved Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate
\$20,000	\$26,532.93	\$26,532.93	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0

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Start Date: FY12

Expected Duration: FY15

Long-term Goal: Determine current distribution and abundance of VEFL on LCR and identify habitat characteristics for the species in MSCP habitat creation areas.

Conservation Measures: VEFL1, MRM1, MRM2, MRM4, CMM1, CMM2 (Vermilion Flycatcher)

Location: Various sites from Lake Mead to Yuma, yet to be determined.

Purpose: To determine best field method for determining current population abundance and location of VEFL within the LCR MSCP boundary.

Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future): Information obtained through this work task will be used in conjunction with data collected during post-development monitoring of habitat conservation areas (F2) and system-wide surveys conducted under D6. Information obtained through this work task will also be used in association with C24 to help define habitat requirements for riparian obligate bird species.

Project Description: The VEFL is highly visible when present due to its bright coloration, active behavior, and distinct vocalizations. However, general bird surveys conducted under D6 in habitats previously occupied by VEFL (Bill Williams River NWR) have not detected them in numbers expected. Surveys for cuckoos (D7) and willow flycatchers (D2) are also lacking in incidental reports of this species. VEFL may begin courtship as early as February, much earlier than many other species on the LCR, thus a presence/absence survey protocol is needed specifically for this species and should begin in February. A literature review will be conducted and a preliminary, system-wide search for the species will be used to develop a site list and survey protocol.

Previous Activities: New start in 2012.

FY12 Activities: A review of the literature of the past 3 decades on VEFL on the LCR was conducted. Results of the literature review showed that VEFL were not at all common on the LCR during the 1980s; however, in the 1990s, 10 nests were documented

during April and May of 1993. According to reports and field notes, there were at least 30 pairs of VEFL breeding on the Bill Williams River NWR and at least 74 nesting attempts in 1994. Various survey efforts for other species within the past decade also report few, if any, incidental observations of VEFL on the Bill Williams River or main stem of the LCR. According to observations of VEFL along established transects beginning in 1998, numbers detected were still high. Since then, there has been a steady decline, with no more than 5 individuals detected during each breeding season between 2006 and 2012.

In 2012, areas on the LCR where VEFL were documented previously were visited as well as the locations of LCR Christmas Bird Counts, and other sightings. A total of 40 sites from Yuma to Needles were visited between 2 February and 19 April, 2012. VEFLs were documented through casual observations (not structured surveys) at 9 locations between Yuma, AZ and Lake Havasu City, AZ and nesting was documented at five locations.

The Blythe Golf Course was occupied by at least one pair and an immature male and a female of unknown age were present the Parker Dam Residences. A small breeding population has been present at the Colorado River Indian Tribe's 'Ahakhav Preserve south of Parker, AZ for at least 10 years, and nesting occurs at the restored cottonwood, willow, and mesquite habitat adjacent. VEFL are also present at the 'Ahakhav Preserve during the winter, although it is unknown if they are the same individuals that breed there.

FY13 Activities: Current and future habitat being created and managed at PVER, CVCA, Cibola Unit 1, Beal Lake Conservation Area and Laguna Division Conservation Area is very consistent with habitat being used by VEFL currently or in the recent past on the Bill Williams River NWR: cottonwood, willow and mesquite stands adjacent to irrigated agricultural fields. Over time, openings within these created habitats will develop. To determine baseline distribution and population abundance, a study design and field protocol will be tested in FY13. Surveys will take place at random locations within the LCR MSCP area that have a potential to support vermilion flycatchers (stratified sampling). The presence of brown-headed cowbirds will also be noted during surveys. Stratified, random surveys will also be conducted within suitable habitat at the restoration sites listed above to determine if and when VEFL colonize these areas.

Proposed FY14 Activities: To determine baseline distribution and population abundance, the 2013 study design and field protocol will continue to be tested and implemented in FY14. Surveys will take place at random locations within the LCR MSCP area that have a potential to support vermilion flycatchers (stratified sampling). The presence of brown-headed cowbirds will also be noted during surveys. Stratified, random surveys will also be conducted within suitable habitat at the restoration sites listed above to determine if and when VEFL colonize these areas.

Pertinent Reports: Annual reports will be available on the LCR MSCP website.