

Work Task C52: Gilded Flicker Research

FY12 Estimates	FY12 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY12	FY13 Approved Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate
\$20,000	\$22,422.40	\$22,422.40	\$150,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$0

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Start Date: FY12

Expected Duration: FY15

Long-term Goal: Determine current distribution and abundance of gilded flicker on the LCR by conducting species specific, non-random surveys.
Conservation Measures: GIFL1, MRM1.

Location: Habitat within and adjacent to the LCR MSCP project area.

Purpose: To determine best field methods for surveying and determine the current population abundance and location of gilded flicker 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 requirements for riparian obligate bird species.

Project Description: General bird surveys conducted under D6 in habitats recently occupied by gilded flickers have not detected them in numbers expected. Additional, research and monitoring is needed to understand the habitat use and population distribution of this species in areas within and adjacent to the LCR MSCP planning area. This research and monitoring may include preliminary literature searches and exploratory surveys, a study to determine year round habitat use and breeding chronology, a study to determine the extent that hybridization occurs between red-shafted and gilded flickers and a design of a species-specific survey protocol.

Previous Activities: This was a new start in FY12.

FY12 Accomplishments: Literature searches were conducted on gilded and northern flickers to add to literature Reclamation had already compiled in 2005. The information was added to the existing annotated bibliography and species profile. All information obtained was cataloged in Reclamation's internal library.

Historical and recent reports and accounts were examined for gilded flicker detections within the LCR MSCP planning area and along the Bill Williams River. Gilded flickers

have been detected more in the riparian habitat of the LCR during the months of the year when they are typically not breeding.

Preliminary surveys to locate breeding gilded flickers were conducted from February 1 to April 31. Areas surveyed were: 1) those areas determined suitable during habitat reconnaissance surveys, 2) areas of known cottonwood and willow habitat determined by Reclamations 2004 vegetation classification and aerial photographs, and 3) saguaro habitat outside the LCR MSCP planning area.

From June 1 to September 31, some of the areas of riparian habitat were surveyed again to see if any gilded flickers were moving in to those areas as individuals or family groups after breeding. Seven of the locations where gilded flickers were detected in the spring were revisited in June, July, and September to see if pairs and/or family groups were staying near their breeding locations after the breeding season.

There was one family group detected in mesquite habitat within the LCR MSCP planning area north of Mineral Wash Road in August. They were observed feeding on the mistletoe that was in the mesquite trees. There was one pair of gilded flickers detected at McIntyre Park in Blythe, California from May through June. The nest cavity was never found so breeding could not be confirmed; however, these birds were probable breeders. There was an incidental sighting of a gilded flicker at the Yuma East Wetlands restoration site. Gilded flickers were readily detected in the saguaro habitat adjacent to the LCR MSCP planning area by Quartzite, Arizona and Kofa NWR and areas north and south of the Bill Williams. Surveying them proved more difficult than thought due to the large home ranges, infrequent vocalizations and the fact that they are indistinguishable by sound from northern flickers.

FY13 Activities: After reviewing the results of the exploratory surveys and literature searches, Reclamation decided to focus its efforts within the next few years on a habitat use, local movement and natural history study. The objectives of this study will be to determine year round habitat use, seasonal movements, breeding chronology and other natural history characteristics (roosting habitat, cavity construction, vocalizations) of the gilded flicker.

In the spring of 2013, the pilot year of the project will begin. Little research has been done on the gilded flicker so the pilot year will be used to test various methods needed to conduct the study. These methods include capturing birds, finding nest cavities, attaching radio transmitters to birds, radio-tracking birds over a time period of six months to a year and recapturing birds in the winter. Staff will closely watch for any negative affects the radio transmitters are having on the health of the bird and determine life of batteries in transmitters. A study plan for the full-scale FY14-15 study will be written.

Proposed FY14 Activities: The second year of the habitat use, local movement and natural history study will take place. This year will be the first year of full implementation of the study with a number of birds being captured, fitted with transmitters and tracked.

Pertinent Reports: The 2012 gilded flicker exploratory survey report will be on the LCR MSCP website. The study plan for the pilot year is available upon request.