

Work Task C51: Vermilion Flycatcher Detectability and Distribution Study

FY13 Estimate	FY13 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY13	FY14 Approved Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate	FY17 Proposed Estimate
\$150,000	\$16,027.17	\$42,560.10	\$150,000	\$0	\$0	\$0

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Start Date: FY12

Expected Duration: FY14

Long-term Goal: Determine current distribution and abundance of vermilion flycatchers 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: LCR MSCP system-wide and habitat creation sites.

Purpose: To determine best field method for determining current population abundance and location of vermilion flycatchers 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 vermilion flycatcher 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 vermilion flycatchers (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. Vermilion flycatchers 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: A review of the literature of the past three decades on vermilion flycatchers on the LCR was conducted. Results of the literature review showed that

vermilion flycatchers 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 vermilion flycatchers 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 vermilion flycatchers on the Bill Williams River or main stem of the LCR. According to observations of vermilion flycatchers 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 vermilion flycatchers 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. Vermilion flycatchers 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 (CRIT Tribal Preserve) south of Parker, AZ for at least 10 years, and nesting occurs at the restored cottonwood, willow, and mesquite habitat adjacent. Vermilion flycatchers are also present at the 'Ahakhav Preserve during the winter, although it is unknown if they are the same individuals that breed there.

FY13 Accomplishments: Fieldwork for the study was completed and a report prepared summarizing of data from 1970-2012. Based on this work, it was determined that no additional field work was necessary for this species except to document its presence if observed while conducting other LCR MSCP activities. Existing habitat and habitat being created and managed at PVER, CVCA, Cibola Unit 1, Beal Lake Conservation Area and Laguna Division Conservation Area are consistent with habitat being used by vermilion flycatchers currently or in the recent past on the Bill Williams River NWR and at restored habitat at the CRIT Tribal Preserve. This habitat consists of mature cottonwood, willow and mesquite stands adjacent to irrigated agricultural fields.

FY13 obligations were less than approved as the planned FY13 surveys were not needed based on the outcome of the literature review and the FY12 surveys.

FY14 Activities: This project was completed in FY14. A report entitled *Vermilion Flycatchers on the LCR: A Summary of Data from 1970–2012* was completed.

Proposed FY15 Activities: Closed in FY14.

Pertinent Reports: The *Vermilion Flycatchers on the LCR: A Summary of Data from 1970–2012* is available on the LCR MSCP website.