

UC SANTA CRUZ CAMPUS NATURAL RESERVE

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER



Dajung Chung

Scientific Name: *Contopus cooperi*

Common Name: Olive-sided Flycatcher

Global Rarity: Apparently Secure

State listing: California Species of Special Concern; Vulnerable

UCSC Rarity: Rare

General Description

The Olive-sided Flycatcher is identified by its distinct appearance and vocalizations described as “quick, three beers!” Often heard in spring and early summer, this large brown bird can be found perched on top of trees in open woodlands, coniferous mountain forests, bogs, and burned forests sallying for flying insects. Despite being vigorous defenders of their territory and nests, the Olive-sided Flycatcher has seen a decline over the last thirty years due primarily to habitat degradation, leading federal and state agents to list them as Species of Special Concern.

Identification

Plumage: Densely-streaked sides, white chest, brown upper plumage, black-tipped wings

Size: Length: 7.1”-7.9”

Shape: Barrel-chested, heavy bill, and occasionally raised head feathers forming a low crest

Sound: Repetitive, high-pitched call resembling *quick, three beers!*



Geographic Range

Olive-sided Flycatchers are long-distance migrants that arrive on their breeding grounds in May and depart again by mid September. In the winter, most migrate to the mountain forests of Central and South America. Fun Fact: the Olive-sided Flycatcher has the longest migration of any flycatcher in the US with some migrating nearly 7,000 miles!



Life history

Habitat: Olive-sided Flycatchers can be found in open woodlands, coniferous mountain forests, bogs, and muskegs perched at the top of living or dead trees, but generally found in mountain and northern coniferous forests. This bird is frequently found in burned forests where the abundance of open space and dead trees to perch upon may help them find and feed on flying insects, though some research suggests low prey availability in the first few years following fire leads to lower reproductive success.

Reproduction: After establishing a pair bond, Olive-sided Flycatchers tend to breed along forest edges and openings to produce three to four eggs every year.

Behavior: Known to aggressively defend its territory and nest, often chasing rivals.

Diet: Feeds almost exclusively on flying insects, especially bees, by sallying (flying from a perch) to catch prey and returning to the same (or different) perch.



Research Highlights and Fun Facts

- The opposite of a fun fact: Olive-sided Flycatchers have experienced a decline of 68% between 1966-2000 in some areas of its breeding range, though it remains secure in many areas.
- Selectively-harvested forests can act as an “ecological trap” for Olive-sided Flycatchers, which sometimes prefer to settle in these areas over burned areas, despite experiencing lower reproductive success and higher nest predation rates in the former habitat.

Conservation Status

California Species of Special Concern



Threats

Rangewide:

1. Habitat loss on its wintering grounds
2. Even-aged forest management following fire or logging
3. Fire suppression leading to dense forest growth without the openings needed by the species
4. Possible localized reduction in prey availability from pesticide use

UCSC campus:

1. Succession of open forest habitats into dense, closed-canopy forest



Ways you can help

1. Document your sightings of Olive-sided Flycatcher occurrences on eBird
2. Monitor recently burned areas for occupation by Olive-sided Flycatcher
3. Support conservation efforts both at home and on the species's wintering range



References and Photo Credits

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