



# Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

## 2023 Progress Report



The southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) is a small Neotropical migratory bird that lives in riparian areas and wetlands in the arid Southwest. It is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The flycatcher's current range is similar to its historic range, but its population has declined because of a decrease in habitat caused by surface water diversion, groundwater pumping, changes in flood and fire regimens, and spread of non-native and invasive plants.

The flycatcher nests in native trees and shrubs where available but also nests in thickets dominated by the nonnative invasive species like tamarisk and Russian olive. Efforts to control non-native species can be detrimental to flycatchers, especially if those plants are removed in places lacking in suitable native riparian habitat.

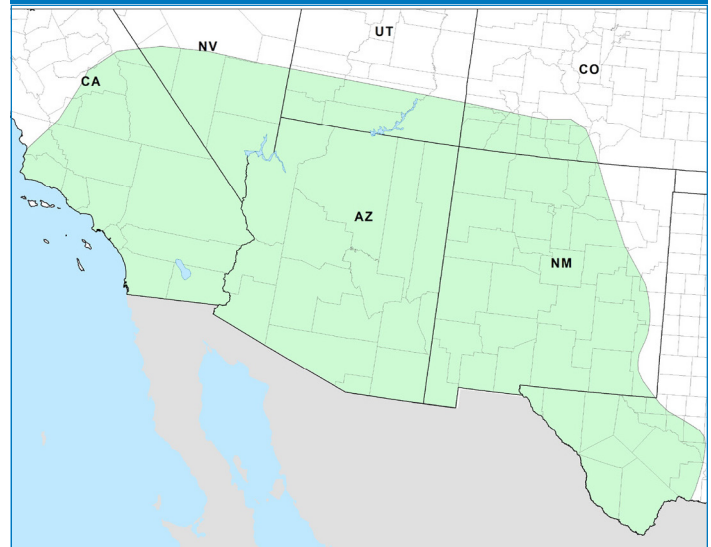
Restoring habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher not only benefits the flycatcher but many other species. Eighty-four species, including the flycatcher, benefit from conservation work in riparian ecosystems.

## NRCS and the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance through the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) partnership to assist agricultural producers implement a variety of conservation practices. Practices aim to protect and restore breeding habitat, combat habitat losses because of surface water diversion and groundwater pumping, address changes in flooding and fire regimens and manage non-native and invasive plants.

WLFW also provides ranchers with regulatory predictability under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which ensures regulatory compliance for ranchers who continue to manage their ranches using NRCS-prescribed conservation practices for up to 30 years. wildlife.

### FOCUS AREAS



## Actions

- Protect, maintain and restore riparian habitat.
- Increase and improve occupied, suitable and potential breeding habitat.
- Manage livestock grazing to increase quality and abundance of habitat.
- Improve weed and invasive species management.
- Increase connectivity of existing habitat.
- Restoring wet meadows and late-season riparian habitats to improve water availability benefiting late season grouse broods, other wildlife and livestock.

## Outcomes and Impacts

Landowners are restoring habitat for southwestern willow flycatcher and other riparian habitat species, aiding in the implementation of its recovery plan and increase landowner confidence that the conservation practices they implement will not harm the species or its habitat.

Through conservation, landowners are helping the southwestern willow flycatcher and other wildlife while improving their land.  
Photo by Jeremy Roberts



Fiscal Year 2023 Southwestern Willow Flycatcher  
NRCS Financial Assistance Contract Summary  
Environmental Quality Incentives Program

State	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
Arizona	536	\$110,835	2
California	46	\$22,729	2
Colorado	0	\$0	0
Nevada	0	\$0	0
New Mexico	0	\$0	0
Utah	143	\$9,747	1
Total	725	\$143,311	5

Data source: NRCS Economic and Policy Assessment Division, October 2023

NRCS Goals

Through WLFW, NRCS works with producers to restore habitat in riparian areas in the Southwest in an effort to increase populations of the southwestern willow flycatcher, provide habitat for other species and provide predictability to producers, ensuring they can continue managing their working lands. NRCS works with landowners to restore nesting habitat in six recovery unit. The acreage accomplishments help meet the 10-year goals of the flycatcher recovery plan.

Overall Summary FY 2012–23

Total NRCS Investment .....\$9,507,432  
Number of Contracts.....124  
Total Acres Contracted .....48,413



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service photo of the southwestern willow flycatcher.

Nesting Habitat in Population Recovery Units:

