

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Contopus cooperi



Although drab in appearance, the Olive-sided Flycatcher is conspicuous for its habit of perching prominently at the top of a large tree or snag and emphatically whistling its loud, three-note song: *quick, free beer*. The species' breeding range extends across boreal North America from Alaska eastward through the northern Great Lakes states and northern New England to Labrador and Newfoundland. In the mountains it breeds south to New Mexico, southern California, and in isolated pockets to Tennessee and North Carolina (Altman and Sallabanks 2000).

The Olive-sided Flycatcher breeds in coniferous and mixed forest openings and edges, including those resulting from ice storms (Faccio 2003), windthrow, fire, and logging (Altman and Sallabanks 2000). A variety of coniferous wetlands also provides suitable breeding habitat, including peatlands, swamps, lake edges, riparian ecotones, and beaver meadows (Peterson and Fichtel 1992). The presence of tall, standing, dead trees as foraging and singing perches appears to be an important, if not critical, habitat feature (Altman and Sallabanks 2000).

The species is relatively easy to detect, particularly early in the nesting cycle, but singing rates decline dramatically after hatching of the young (Wright 1997). Large territories of up to 40 to 45 hectares (99 to 111 acres) and well-concealed nests make it difficult to confirm breeding (Altman and Sallabanks 2000). During the second atlas, nest building was observed on 15 and 19 June, and fledged young were observed on 16 and 23 July.

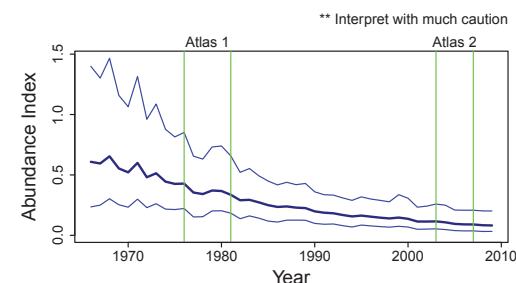
The Olive-sided Flycatcher is patchily distributed throughout Vermont. Although more commonly encountered in cooler regions such as the Northeastern Highlands, it is not abundant anywhere. During the atlas, 76 percent of the priority block records came from the Northeastern Highlands, Northern Vermont Piedmont, and Northern Green Mountains.

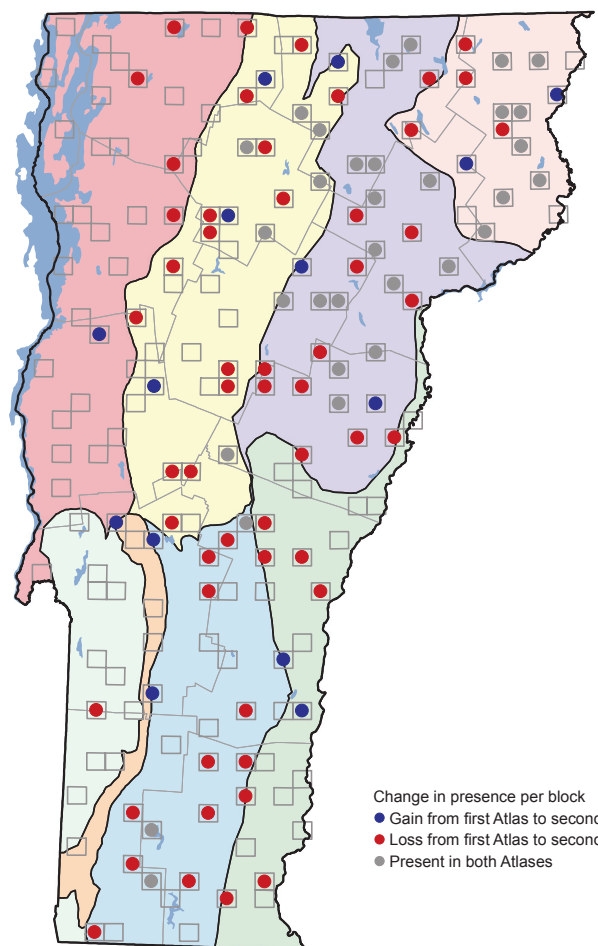
While distribution of the Olive-sided Flycatcher showed little change since the first atlas, the species' frequency of occurrence declined markedly. Statewide, block occupancy was down 45 percent during the second atlas; the majority of declines occurred in the North-

ern Vermont Piedmont and the Green Mountains. This pattern was mirrored in atlas results from New York (Peterson 2008) and Ontario (Cheskey 2007), both of which reported distributions similar to their first atlases, but declines in block occupancy. Breeding Bird Survey results have indicated significant and steady 3.2 and 4.4 percent per year declines, range-wide and in eastern North America, respectively, between 1982 and 2007. Populations in both Maine and New Hampshire showed significant decreases during the same period (Sauer et al. 2011).

These widespread and consistent declines suggest that survivorship may be affected by loss of habitat on the bird's Neotropical wintering grounds, which are primarily in the northern Andes Mountains of South America, and to a lesser extent in Central America and southern Mexico (Altman 1997). Reduced overwinter survivorship may be exacerbated by the low reproductive rates for genus *Contopus*, the lowest of all passerine genera in North America (Altman and Sallabanks 2000). On the breeding grounds, limiting factors contributing to population declines may include loss of habitat due to changes

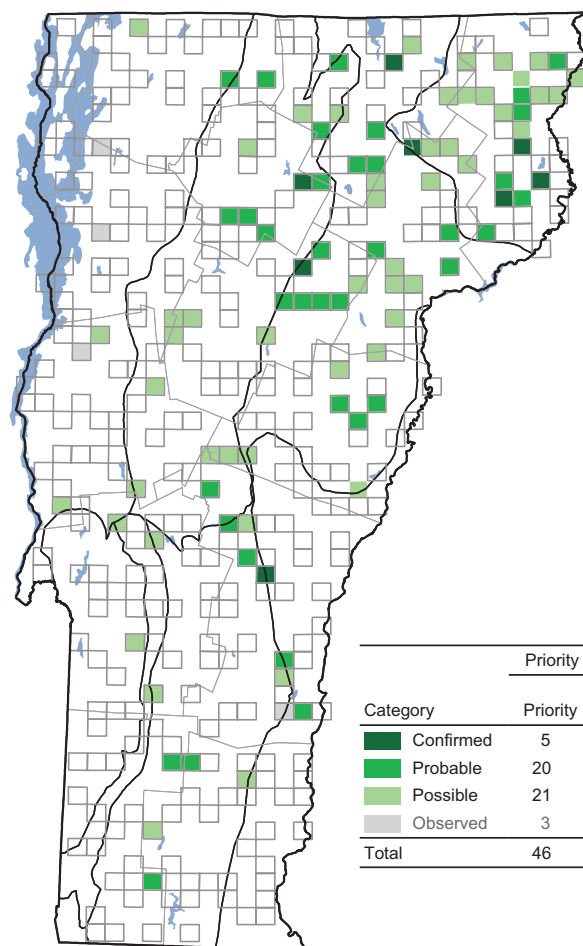
RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OVER TIME





CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

Biophysical Region	First Atlas	Second Atlas	Change	% Change
Champlain Valley	5	1	- 4	- 80
Northeastern Highlands	12	10	- 2	- 17
Northern Green Mountains	20	10	- 10	- 50
Northern Vermont Piedmont	27	17	- 10	- 37
Southern Green Mountains	15	5	- 10	- 67
Southern Vermont Piedmont	6	2	- 4	- 67
Taconic Mountains	1	0	- 1	- 100
Vermont Valley	0	1	+ 1	+ 100
Totals	86	46	- 40	- 47



Category	Priority Block Count	
	Priority 1	Priority 1 & 2
Confirmed	5	7
Probable	20	34
Possible	21	46
Observed	3	4
Total	46	87

DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

Biophysical Region	% of region species occupies	% of all records for this species found in region
Champlain Valley	5	5
Northeastern Highlands	51	22
Northern Green Mountains	29	22
Northern Vermont Piedmont	43	32
Southern Green Mountains	21	14
Southern Vermont Piedmont	7	3
Taconic Mountains	4	1
Vermont Valley	12	1

in forest management practices and fire suppression; decreased abundance of preferred prey such as Hymenoptera species (Altman and Sallabanks 2000); and increased nest predation in managed forest stands compared to naturally burned stands (Robertson and Hutto 2007).

The Olive-sided Flycatcher is a species of conservation concern on state, regional, and national levels. In Vermont, it is a Species of Special Concern due to low abundance and declining trends, both statewide and regionally. Little data exist on the impacts of forest management on this species in eastern North America. In

general, however, retaining snags in appropriate habitat, preventing the conversion of coniferous forest to other land uses, and maintaining or mimicking natural forest-disturbance patterns that create suitable forest openings will likely benefit Olive-sided Flycatchers. In Vermont, such actions might have the greatest impact if implemented on large forest blocks that can be managed at a landscape scale, such as the Green Mountain National Forest and the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge.

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