



New and Rare Bird Species Identified through Landbird Monitoring at Tumacácori National Historical Park

2011

Introduction

Landbirds are monitored annually at Tumacácori National Historical Park (NHP), as well as the other ten parks in the Sonoran Desert Network (SODN). In April and May 2011, two transects were surveyed in riparian habitat at the park, and two species, the marsh wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) and Mississippi kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), were detected at the park for the first time. Another species observed, the olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), was not new but is a rare species at the park.

Life History

Marsh wren

The marsh wren is a vocal inhabitant of marshes, singing all day and throughout the night. Like other wrens, this small, brown bird often holds its tail upright. Although marsh wrens in the western U.S. are only somewhat different in appearance than those in the eastern U.S., the populations have very different songs (the songs of western birds are less musical). The species eats insects and spiders. It builds a domed nest of grasses and sedges just above the water line, where it lays 5–9 brown, spotted eggs. Throughout much of Arizona, the bird is present in winter only (as in Tumacácori NHP), but it is present year-round in some parts of the state. The marsh wren is declining in the eastern portion of its range, but is increasing in the West. [Listen](#).

Mississippi kite

The Mississippi kite is a medium-sized raptor (14.5 inches [36.8 centimeters] in length) with long, narrow wings and a long tail. It has a gray body, a lighter gray head, and a black

tail. The bird feeds mainly on insects and inhabits riverine forests, open woodlands, and prairies near riparian woodlands, as well as wooded areas in suburban settings. The kite nests in trees, where it lays 1–3 bluish eggs. The species is found in scattered locations across the southern and central U.S. Some kites are found in the country year-round, while others migrate to South America to spend the winter.

Olive-sided flycatcher

The olive-sided flycatcher, a rare species at Tumacácori NHP, is a large flycatcher with a white breast and gray sides. The species inhabits boreal and western coniferous forests, where it eats flying insects, especially bees. The bird is often found in burned forests, where snags and open habitat may make hunting easier. The nest of this species is an open cup made of twigs, lichens, and small roots, which is placed high in a tree near the end of a horizontal branch. It lays 3–4 creamy white to buff-colored eggs. The species is a summer breeder in much of New Mexico and northern Arizona, but would likely be seen on migration at Tumacácori NHP; it winters in Central and South America. [Listen](#).

Links and References

Information here comes primarily from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds, an online bird guide available at <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide>. Additional details come from The Encyclopedia of North American Birds, by M. Vanner, 2003, Parragon Publishing, U.K. Bird sounds courtesy the Macaulay Library.



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Marsh wren.



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Mississippi kite.



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Olive-sided flycatcher.