

Minimum Qualification Guidelines
Western Distinct Population Segment of the Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*)
(As described in the May 12, 2015, Region 8 Programmatic Intra-Service Consultation
for the Issuance of Recovery Permits)

To reduce risks related to incidental take associated with research, education, and recovery actions of the yellow-billed cuckoo, the Service will review the credentials of all applicants for section 10(a)1(A) recovery permits and sub-permits to ensure that only qualified individuals will survey, or conduct/direct research efforts for, the yellow-billed cuckoo. Applicants will be considered qualified for a recovery permit or sub-permit to independently conduct surveys or research for the yellow-billed cuckoo if they meet the Service's most current qualification requirements. Specifically, at a minimum, prospective applicants must:

1. Possess a Bachelor's degree in biology or a resource management-related field, or equivalent field/work experience;
2. Have completed course work in ornithology, and study-design/survey-methodology, or equivalent field experience, and have an understanding of the habitat, community ecology, and life history of the yellow-billed cuckoo preferably by attendance at an appropriate workshop designed for the species;
3. Have familiarity with suitable yellow-billed cuckoo habitat within the geographic range of the species as requested in the permit application;
4. Have familiarity with other avian species, native and non-native, which may co-occur with the yellow-billed cuckoo;
5. For surveys involving taped playback of the contact call of the yellow-billed cuckoo: Have verifiable experience in the design and implementation of ornithological research, including conducting surveys at a minimum of 5 different sites for a minimum of 40 hours, identifying the species in the field under the supervision of a 10(a)1(A) permitted yellow-billed cuckoo biologist during which time at least 5 yellow-billed cuckoo adults were positively identified. An individual site is defined as a distinct 1-2 mile segment of an individual river system. Different river systems may be counted towards the qualification. Experience conducting surveys of the Eastern DPS of the yellow-billed cuckoo or similar Cuculid species (mangrove cuckoo or black-billed cuckoo, for example) under the supervision of a species expert may count towards partial fulfillment of this qualification.
6. For nest monitoring activities: Have observed at least 5 nests (can be similar species) under the supervision of a permitted biologist;
7. For banding: Applicant must be in possession of (or listed as a subpermittee on) a valid federal bird banding permit for yellow-billed cuckoos or be qualified for a banding permit for the species and be in the process of acquiring a banding permit (this qualification will typically require experience using a mist net of appropriate size for capture);

8. Permittees or sub-permittees performing collection of biological samples, like blood or feathers, from yellow-billed cuckoos must have demonstrated prior experience with no less than (12) individual passerine or cuculid birds while under the supervision of a permitted biologist or an ornithologist experienced in this procedure and as approved by the appropriate Service field office (a federal banding permit is required for capture of yellow-billed cuckoos with a mist net);
9. For attaching and monitoring radio transmitters, geolocators, GPS tracking devices, or other transmission/locating devices: Applicant must be in possession of (or listed as a subpermittee on) a valid federal bird banding permit for yellow-billed cuckoos or be qualified for a banding permit for the species and be in the process of acquiring a banding permit (this qualification will typically require experience using a mist net of appropriate size for capture) and have documented training in the safe attachment and monitoring of the transmission/locating devices being used;
10. Receive a written recommendation from at least one 10(a)1(A) permitted yellow-billed cuckoobiologist stating that the prospective permittee was trained at least in part by them and that the prospective permittee meets the minimum qualification guidelines listed above;
11. For individuals conducting research, the completion of a study proposal accepted by an accredited educational or appropriate research institution, a letter of support from a faculty advisor (for students), and a list of experience conducting the research activities or related activities on the listed or similar species will be required, and;
12. For individuals leading a training workshop: 1) Applicant must already be permitted for other activities involving the yellow-billed cuckoo, 2) have the experience of assisting a permitted instructor in a yellow-billed cuckoo workshop, and 3) provide a letter of reference from the permitted instructor.

Individuals not qualified to conduct scientific research or other activities covered under a recovery permit or sub-permit will be required to work under the supervision of a qualified, permitted individual until the minimum qualifications are met. The Service will develop or modify, as new information becomes available, existing and additional qualifications that each applicant must meet in order to qualify for a yellow-billed cuckoo recovery permit or sub-permit.