

# **Golden-cheeked Warbler**

## **Scientific Permit Processing and Reporting**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

USFWS Austin ESFO  
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#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this document is to address common concerns and frequently asked questions regarding the scientific permit processing and reporting issues for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) section 10(a)(1)(A) permit holders authorized for conducting presence/absence surveys and research activities for the federally endangered golden-cheeked warbler (GCWA).

#### **Scientific Permit Processing**

*Who needs to apply for a section 10(a)(1)(A) permit?*

Anyone wishing to conduct GCWA presence/absence surveys or research activities must apply for a section 10(a)(1)(A) permit (also known as a scientific, recovery, or enhancement of survival permit) from the Service.

*How do I apply for a section 10(a)(1)(A) permit?*

All 10(a)(1)(A) permit applications are processed through the online [ePermits portal](#). After registering and creating a login, you will follow the ePermits prompts and fillable forms to complete your application within the portal. This is the same information previously found in the separate Form 3-200-59.

Be sure to also attach a resume or curriculum vitae as well as your GCWA experience form(s) to demonstrate your experience with GCWA surveys in the field. We will be looking to your resume or curriculum vitae to determine if you have a strong background in passerine surveys and bird song identification, which will determine how much GCWA survey experience you will need to qualify for the permit. Please see the “Minimum Experience Requirements for Conducting Golden-cheeked Warbler Presence/Absence Surveys” document on our website for more information on experience categories for permit applicants. The requirements for each category of experience are followed exactly, so please ensure you have the required experience listed.

*I am a current GCWA permit holder. How do I renew or amend my permit?*

All 10(a)(1)(A) permits for research and recovery expire after 5 years. Permit holders must apply to renew their permits at least 6 months prior to the expiration date of their existing permit to prevent a lapse in permit coverage for their GCWA-related activities. Permit holders must also apply to amend their permit if a change is needed to their existing permit (e.g., add new personnel or change in covered personnel or activities).

All permit renewals and amendments must be processed through the online ePermits portal. Amendments to the existing permit may also be requested during the renewal process using the same application and form. If new personnel are added to the permit at any time, resumes or

curriculum vitae and GCWA experience forms must be attached in ePermits for the newly requested personnel. All permit holders must be in compliance with their existing permit, having submitted a complete annual report for each previous year they held a section 10(a)(1)(A) permit, before an application for a permit renewal or amendment can be processed.

## **Annual Reporting**

*When is my annual report due?*

All survey data (GCWA observation data and GCWA survey area data) for GCWA presence/absence surveys are due **no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>** of each survey season. The GCWA annual scientific permit report consisting of a narrative description of permit activities conducted during the year is due **no later than December 15<sup>th</sup>** of each year.

Please see the “U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 10(a)(1)(A) Scientific Permit Requirements for Conducting Presence/Absence Surveys and Habitat Assessments for the Golden-cheeked Warbler” available on the Austin Ecological Services Field Office (Austin ESFO) website for more information

*How do I submit my annual report?*

All GCWA reports (including presence/absence survey data) must be submitted electronically to [GCWAreporting@fws.gov](mailto:GCWAreporting@fws.gov), as we are no longer accepting reports in hard copy. At some time in the future, reports may be required to be uploaded in the ePermits online portal. The GCWA lead biologist for the Austin ESFO will notify all GCWA permit holders when this is the case.

*I didn't conduct any GCWA surveys this year. Do I still need to submit an annual report?*

Yes. If you did not conduct any GCWA activities authorized by your section 10(a)(1)(A) permit, you must at least document this by sending us an email stating that you did not conduct any GCWA activities under your permit to remain in compliance with your permit. Submit this statement to [GCWAreporting@fws.gov](mailto:GCWAreporting@fws.gov). This statement will be filed in our records as your annual report.

*I conducted surveys with or as a subcontractor for another GCWA permit holder this year. Do I still need to submit an annual report?*

Yes. You still need to submit a report to us. However, if your survey data and narrative report information will be included in another GCWA permit holder's annual report, you do not need to submit the same information. You may send us an email stating that the report for activities conducted under your permit will be submitted under another permit holder's annual report. You must provide the other permit holder's name and permit number in this statement so we know where we can find your data. Submit this statement to [GCWAreporting@fws.gov](mailto:GCWAreporting@fws.gov). This statement will be filed in our records as your annual report.

*Why is it important that I submit an annual report each year? What happens if I don't submit one?*

The data acquired from the issuance of section 10(a)(1)(A) permits is valuable to the decisions that the Service makes regarding land management, consultations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, recovery plans, species status assessments, and status reviews. Timely

submission of your annual reports is a condition of your permit. Failure to submit a complete annual report in one or more years over the duration of your permit's term will make your permit ineligible for renewal.

*What do I need to submit if I didn't observe or detect any GCWA during my presence/absence surveys this year?*

If no GCWA were detected in a given year, you only need to submit the GCWA survey area data by **June 30<sup>th</sup>** and the GCWA annual scientific permit report consisting of a narrative description of permit activities by **December 15<sup>th</sup>**. No observation data will need to be submitted, as no positive detections were made. It is helpful to mention that no positive GCWA detections were made in the body of the email transmitting your GCWA survey data.

*My permitted GCWA activities only consist of monitoring a preserve or another tract already known to be occupied by GCWA; therefore, I use different methods than the Service's requirements for conducting GCWA presence/absence surveys. When do I need to submit my GCWA observation data?*

We are aware of some permit holders that collect GCWA observation data for monitoring or research purposes on some tracts known to be occupied by GCWA (e.g., Balcones National Wildlife Refuge, Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, Fort Hood) that do not conform to the Service's GCWA presence/absence survey requirements. Since we maintain this data separately from the presence/absence survey data, annual reports for this type of data may be submitted no later than **December 15<sup>th</sup>** of each year along with the narrative description of permit activities.

*I forgot to submit an annual report for one or more survey years during the duration on my permit. What should I do to get back in compliance with my permit?*

Please contact the current Austin ESFO GCWA lead biologist and submit your outstanding report(s) as soon as possible. In most cases, the GCWA will review your outstanding report(s) and help you get back into compliance with your permit.

*Should the GCWA observation data, survey area data, and habitat assessment data I submit be formatted in a specific way?*

Yes. It is absolutely essential that all data resulting from GCWA presence/absence surveys and habitat assessments are formatted according to the Service's GCWA data instruction documents before they are submitted to our office so that the data can be easily uploaded to our GCWA geodatabase. Please refer to "GCWA Observation Data Reporting Instructions," "GCWA Survey Area Data Reporting Instructions," and "GCWA Habitat Assessment Area Data Reporting Instructions" on the Austin ESFO website for our data reporting requirements and formatting instructions. They may also be requested from the Austin ESFO's current GCWA lead biologist. Failure to submit data in accordance with these instructions will be considered an incomplete annual report submission.