



Black-capped Vireo

Post-delisting Monitoring News

2019 Activities

This year, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) launched the post-delisting monitoring period for the black-capped vireo, which was removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife on May 16, 2018, due to recovery. The FWS, in cooperation with our partners, developed a post-delisting monitoring plan (PDMP) for the species that will track its progress over a 12-year period.

The 2019 breeding season marks the first contribution towards completing our PDMP. Major contributions from our conservation partners helped to make this first year very successful!

Kick-off Workshop at Fort Hood

In March, the U.S. Army hosted a workshop at Fort Hood to kick-off the first year of the PDMP. The 2-day workshop brought together researchers to learn about the PDMP and get hands-on experience in methods for estimating birds and finding nests. Attendees at the workshop included representatives from:

- U.S. Army
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge
- Oncor Electric Delivery
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
- Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)
- American Bird Conservancy (ABC)
- Arlington and Austin FWS Field Offices

Participants spent time in a classroom setting and in the field within vireo territories. Special thanks to all of our partners for bringing their expertise, ideas, and enthusiasm to the workshop – especially Fort Hood for hosting the event.



Workshop attendees take a short break from searching for nesting vireos at Fort Hood.

Credit: Dan Kelch

Cooperative Agreement Awarded to TNC

Through a cooperative agreement with the FWS, TNC was provided a financial award to conduct surveys under the PDMP. The agreement will provide necessary data on black-capped vireos across four Texas preserves over a two-year span. For some preserves, previously unsurveyed portions will be surveyed for the first time. Additionally, nest monitoring data will be collected on some preserves.

This first season, FWS biologists assisted TNC in monitoring at Love Creek and Independence Creek Preserves. The Independence Creek Preserve surveys were the most comprehensive at that location in recent years, covering approximately 13,000 acres and monitoring 348 points. Raw data collected included over 70 males singing in the area – TNC will use the data to produce an estimate of the population. Nest monitoring was implemented at Love Creek – 11 nests monitored and zero nests parasitized. Additional work was completed at Dolan Falls Preserve.



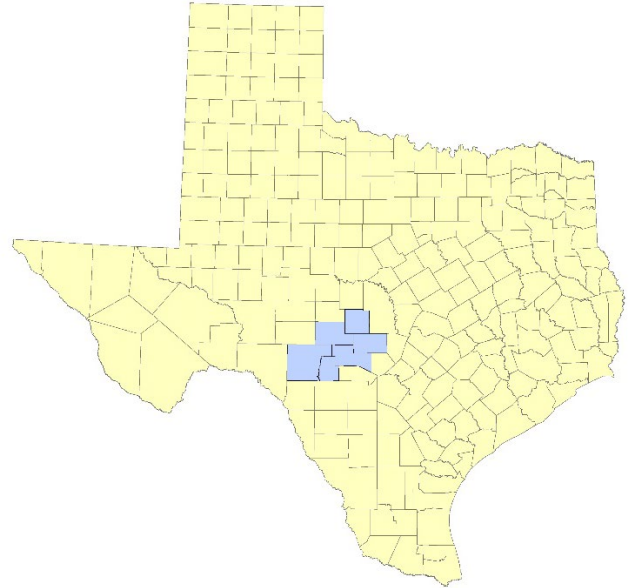
Black-capped vireo nest at Love Creek Preserve.

Nest Monitoring at Balcones

In 2019, a partnership with Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge and the American Bird Conservancy was established to monitor nests at the refuge. The refuge has observed a growing population of vireos as a result of managing and monitoring since it was established in 1992. This season, 17 vireo nests were monitored to better understand nest success and rate of brown-headed cowbird parasitism in support of the PDMP. Point count surveys were also employed this year with the goal of estimating abundance on the refuge – results coming soon.

Vireos on the Road

TxDOT has a wealth of conservation experience from years of coordination and cooperation with multiple partners in Texas. They were enthusiastic about lending their expertise for the PDMP by collecting bird data from road transects! This season TxDOT surveyed roads in several counties using standard Breeding Bird Survey methods, and discovered previously unreported vireos. Over 30 males were counted on one stretch of road in Kimble County in a single day!



Counties surveyed by TxDOT and Breeding Bird Surveys.

Wichita Mountains Fire Management

The FWS conducted a prescribed fire at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge on approximately 4,300 acres. The fire was aimed at controlling invasive vegetation and shrub growth to promote vireo nesting habitat. Vireo recovery in Oklahoma is centered around the Wichita Mountains area, which includes the refuge and Fort Sill Military Installation. In 2018, the refuge estimated its vireo population at over 7,000 breeding males.

TPWD State Lands

TPWD has led efforts and partnerships that were essential to the vireo's recovery – including managing and monitoring numerous state lands for the vireos. Major populations have been increasing or stable on Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Kerr WMA and the Devils River State Park properties. TPWD counted 510 male territories at Kerr and 231 at Mason Mountain this season. Smaller populations, such as the one at Muse WMA, continue to show increasing vireo activity – this year 25 males were counted at Muse. TPWD is targeting funding opportunities for future efforts for PDMP implementation.



Credit: USFWS

Prescribed fire at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge to improve habitat conditions.

More News!

Partnerships continue to expand for vireo monitoring, bringing new information that can be utilized to support the PDMP. Bandera Corridor Conservation Bank completed surveys at several bank properties and counted over 40 breeding males. Breeding Bird Survey routes in the southern Edwards Plateau region of Texas continue to show vireos utilizing the area in good numbers.

The Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture staff are working to develop a draft conservation business plan for Edwards Plateau conservation, with input from partner agencies, conservation organizations, and individuals. The draft plan will incorporate the conservation needs of the black-capped vireo and other priority birds, and is intended to continue through the PDMP and beyond. The goal is to help coordinate partner monitoring and management efforts into a model for future full-annual cycle conservation efforts.

Next Season

We are preparing for next breeding season. To date we have planned the following PDMP activities:

- Tier 2 location surveys
- Season two for the Nature Conservancy Preserves
- Refining list of priority locations for monitoring
- State Park Monitoring

**For more information, or to
contribute data, contact:**

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Credit: Gil Eckrich

Male black-capped vireo.