



Birds

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

Empidonax flaviventris

Priority 2 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Class: Birds (*Aves*)

Order: Perching Birds (*Passeriformes*)

Family: Flycatchers (*Tyrannidae*)



General comments:

The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is a small, olive-green songbird with a bold yellow belly, broad eye ring, and short bill, often detected by its sharp “chebunk” call from within dense, boggy spruce-fir forests. In Maine, it breeds primarily in cool, mossy peatlands and wet coniferous forests across the northern and western parts of the state. The population is stable in some regions and decreasing in others; but these estimates should be interpreted cautiously due to low detection rates, road-biased sampling, and sparse coverage across much of the species’ remote breeding range. Causes of change are poorly understood, and research is needed to clarify breeding productivity, overwintering ecology, etc.

Species Conservation Range Maps:

Town Map: [Empidonax flaviventris_Towns.pdf](#)

Subwatershed Map: [Empidonax flaviventris_HUC12.pdf](#)

SGCN Priority Ranking - Designation Criteria:

High Climate Change Vulnerability:	Vulnerability: 3, Confidence: High, Reviewers: Decided in Workshop (W)
High Regional Conservation Priority:	Partners In Flight: Regional Concern: Yes, Regional Stewardship: , Regional Importance: Yes, Continental Importance: No

Habitat Associations:

Formation: Boreal Wetland Forest

Macrogroup: North American Boreal Conifer Poor Swamp

Habitat System: Eastern Boreal-Sub-boreal Conifer Acidic Swamp and Treed Poor Fen

Formation: Northeastern Upland Forest

Macrogroup: Acadian-Northern Appalachian Forest

Habitat System: Acadian Low Elevation Spruce-Fir-Hardwood Forest

Habitat System: Acadian Sub-boreal Spruce Flat

Habitat System: Acadian-Appalachian Montane Spruce-Fir Forest

Habitat System: Laurentian-Acadian Pine-Hemlock-Hardwood Forest
strong conifer/mossy understory present

Habitat System: Laurentian-Acadian Sub-boreal Dry-Mesic Pine-Black Spruce-Hardwood Forest

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Formation: Northeastern Wetland Forest

Macrogroup: Laurentian-Acadian Flooded & Swamp Forest

	Habitat System: Acadian-Northern Appalachian Conifer Seepage Forest
	Habitat System: Laurentian-Acadian Alkaline Conifer-Hardwood Swamp
	Habitat System: Laurentian-Acadian Floodplain Forest
	Habitat System: Northern Appalachian-Acadian Conifer-Hardwood Acidic Swamp

Formation: Peatland

Macrogroup: North American Boreal & Subboreal Bog & Acidic Fen

	Habitat System: Acadian Maritime Bog
	Habitat System: Eastern Boreal-Sub-Boreal Acidic Basin Fen
	Habitat System: Eastern Boreal-Sub-Boreal Bog
	Habitat System: North-Central Interior and Appalachian Acidic Peatland <i>Less extensive in Maine, more in southern portion of the state without many Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, but habitat could be suitable if the birds are present</i>

Threats

Threat Priority Level based on Severity and Actionability		Moderate Severity		High Severity	
	Highly Actionable		Medium-High		High
	Moderately Actionable		Medium		Medium-High
	Actionable with Difficulty		Low		Low

IUCN Level 1 Threat Biological Resource Use

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Logging and Wood Harvesting

Severity: Moderate Severity**Actionability:** Moderately Actionable**Notes:** Historic and ongoing logging has reduced the extent and quality of mature spruce and conifer forests.

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IUCN Level 1 Threat Other Options

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Lack of knowledge

Severity: Moderate Severity

Actionability: Moderately Actionable

Notes: Many aspects of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher's life history remain poorly documented, including nest success, fledgling survival, dispersal, and wintering ecology. The species is difficult to study due to low detectability and remote breeding habitats; population dynamics are not well understood.

IUCN Level 1 Threat Residential and Commercial Development

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Tourism and Recreational Areas

Severity: Moderate Severity

Actionability: Moderately Actionable

Notes: Development of ski areas in high-elevation spruce-fir forests degrades breeding habitat.

IUCN Level 1 Threat Climate Change and Severe Weather

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Habitat Shifting or Alteration

Severity: High Severity

Actionability: Actionable with Difficulty

Notes: Warming is reducing spruce-fir habitat at southern range edge.

IUCN Level 1 Threat Pollution

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Air-Bourne Pollutants

Severity: Moderate Severity

Actionability: Actionable with Difficulty

Notes: Acid rain and mercury affect forest health and insect prey, especially in montane habitats.

Species Level Conservation Actions:

None. Only species specific conservation actions that address high (red) or medium-high (orange) priority threats are summarized here.

Conservation Actions Associated with the Boreal Conifer birds Guild:

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Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Manage for a mature white pine component including those that extend beyond the canopy.	Habitat Management	moderate	on-going

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Logging and Wood Harvesting
- Wood and Pulp Plantations

Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Conserve large, contiguous tracts of mature spruce-fir and black spruce forest across Maine's boreal region.	Habitat Management	critical	on-going

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Logging and Wood Harvesting
- Habitat Shifting or Alteration

Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Promote forest management practices that maintain or restore mature conifer forest structure, including vertical diversity and intact canopy cover.	Habitat Management	high	new

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Logging and Wood Harvesting
- Habitat Shifting or Alteration

Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Minimize large-scale salvage and preemptive harvesting during forest pest outbreaks to preserve long-term forest integrity. Promote pest outbreak response strategies that maintain mature forest structure (older trees, snags and downed wood, structural diversity).	Habitat Management	moderate	new

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Problematic Native Species-Diseases

Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Identify and protect climate refugia and elevational/latitudinal habitat gradients critical to boreal species persistence under changing conditions.	Research	high	new

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Habitat Shifting or Alteration

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Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Increase coordinated monitoring efforts across seasons and regions to better track population trends and distribution shifts in boreal bird communities.	Survey and Monitoring	high	new

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Lack of knowledge

Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Incorporate innovative monitoring approaches (e.g., ARUs, remote sensing) to improve detection of low-density or cryptic species across remote boreal landscapes.	Survey and Monitoring	high	new

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Lack of knowledge

Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Coordinate across public and private landowners to maintain landscape-scale connectivity of mature boreal forest habitats.	Public Outreach	high	new

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Other Ecosystem Modifications

Conservation Action	Category	Biological Priority	Type
Monitor bird community responses to spruce budworm treatment and integrate bird impact assessments into outbreak response planning. Expand research and monitoring efforts to understand short- and long-term effects of insecticide use (including newer agents like tebufenozide) on boreal bird populations, especially for spruce budworm specialists.	Survey and Monitoring	high	new

Threat(s) Addressed By This Conservation Action

- Agricultural and Forestry Effluents
- Problematic Native Species-Diseases

Broad Taxonomic Group Conservation Actions:

Additional relevant conservation actions for this species are assigned within broader taxonomic groups in Maine's Wildlife Action Plan: Element 4.

Habitat Based Conservation Actions:

Additional conservation actions that may benefit habitat(s) associated with this species can be found in Maine's Wildlife Action Plan: Element 4. Click on the Habitat Grouping of interest to launch a habitat based report summarizing relevant conservation actions and associated SGCN.

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The Wildlife Action Plan was developed through a lengthy participatory process with state agencies, targeted conservation partners, and the general public. The Plan is non-regulatory. The species, threats, and voluntary conservation actions identified in the Plan complement, but do not replace, existing work