

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Animal Abstract

Element Code: ABPBX06010

Data Sensitivity: No

CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Setophaga ruticilla*

COMMON NAME: American Redstart; Common redstart; fire-tail; redstart flycatcher; yellow tailed warbler

SYNONYMS:

FAMILY: Parulidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: Linnaeus, Syst. Nat., ed. 10, vol. 1, 1758, p. 186.
Based on The Red-Start, *Ruticilla Americana* Catesby, Carolina, vol. 1, p. 67.

TYPE LOCALITY: Virginia, USA

TYPE SPECIMEN:

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: Two subspecies are recognized.

DESCRIPTION: Length is 13cm (4 ½ to 5 ¾ in). Male is glossy black with orange patches on the sides, wings, and tail; belly and undertail coverts are white. Female is gray-olive above, white below with yellow patches. Immature resembles a female. By first fall, a young male's patches show some salmon; by first spring, breast has some black spotting; full adult male plumage is acquired by second late summer.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: The orange patches on the wing, sides, and basal parts of the outer tail feathers make the identification of this species easy. These birds dance actively about with their wings and tail spread. Their nest is similar to that of a yellow warbler but has neater construction and thinner walls. And it is also similar to the American Goldfinch but is higher than wide. They have a variable song with a series of high thin notes usually followed by wheezy down slurred notes.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Color photo (National Geographic 1999:390)

TOTAL RANGE: Nests from southeast Alaska to Newfoundland, south to eastern Oregon, northern Utah, northern Colorado, northwestern California, Arizona, southeast Oklahoma, eastern Texas, southern Louisiana, central Georgia, the Carolinas and southern Virginia. Winters from southern Baja California, central Mexico and West Indies south into northern South America.

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: As far north as Prescott and the White Mountains and east to Tucson and south to Mexico.

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: The *Setophaga ruticilla* have a variable song with a series of high thin notes usually followed by wheezy down slurred notes. They often fan their tails and spread their wings when perched.

REPRODUCTION: The nest is built by the female in an upright fork, usually a deciduous tree or shrub, occasionally in vine tangle, 1.2-21.3 m (4-70 ft) above the ground (commonly 3-6 m (10-20 ft)). It is a firm, compactly woven cup of plant down, fibers of bark, rootlets, grasses, outside ornamented with lichens, bits of birch bark, bound with spider's silk, sometimes lined with feathers of tanagers, indigo bunting, or wood thrush. They sometimes use old or deserted new nests of vireos. It typically requires the female one-week to complete the nest. Nest dimensions: outside diameter 7 cm (2.75 in), height 7.6 cm (3 in), inside diameter 4.4 cm (1.75 in) and depth is 3.8 cm (1.5 in). Eggs: May – June; 2-5, usually 4, white to cream-gray or green-white, speckled and spotted with grays, browns. The egg shell is smooth with a slight gloss. The average egg size is 16.2 x 12.3 mm. They are oval to short-oval. The eggs are incubated for 12 days and the young first fly 8-9 days after hatching. Typically, there is only one brood, though females may renest up to three times when nests are lost.

FOOD HABITS: They eat mostly forest tree insects: including flea beetles, leaf beetles, round-headed wood borers, caterpillars of brown-tail and gypsy moths, cankerworms, also spittle insects, moths, treehoppers, leafhoppers, scale insects, plants lice (aphids), also spiders, daddy longlegs, wasps, crane flies, and lantern flies. They also eat fruit of barberry, Juneberries, and seeds of magnolia trees.

HABITAT: Breeding habitat is comprised of mature and second growth wooded habitats. Deciduous and mixed deciduous-coniferous second growth forest, alder swamps, old growth forests with regenerating trees, willow thickets, small groves, river swamps. They require closed canopy and prefers dense midstory and understory and well-developed undergrowth. Non-breeding: In winter and migration their habitats include various kinds of forests, woodlands, scrublands, and thickets, including mangroves. They also use a wide variety of agricultural habitats (e.g. cacao, citrus, pine plantations, mango, and coffee). Primary wintering habitats are mainly in broadleaf evergreen woods and thickets, such as hammocks and mangroves.

ELEVATION: Based on two records in the Heritage Data Management System (HDMS), elevation ranges from 5,190 to 7,365 ft. (1582-2245 m) (AGFD, unpublished data accessed 2002).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Deciduous and mixed deciduous-coniferous second growth forest, alder swamps, old growth forest, woodland, scrubland, and thickets.

POPULATION TRENDS: The population trend is negative with most states experiencing net losses over the last 3 decades.

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS: None
STATE STATUS: WSC (AGFD, WSCA in prep)
[State Endangered AGFD, TNW 1988]

OTHER STATUS:

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: For *Setophaga ruticilla* to exist as a viable population their habitat needs to be protected. Degradation and fragmentation are the main threats associated with their habitat (e.g. herbicide reversion of habitat to spruce-fir forest, conversion of habitat to pine monocultures and deforestation). Another factor that needs to be controlled is the nest parasitism of cowbirds. Where forests are fragmented cowbirds can have a heavy impact, but where forests are more extensive, cowbird parasitism is rare. Also rates of nests predation increase in fragmented landscapes.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:

SUGGESTED PROJECTS: A few areas where more research needs to be done are: minimum area requirements, better estimates of minimum viable population size and impacts for both cowbird parasitism and habitat fragmentation, also studies of the relative role of tropical deforestation compared with temperate habitat fragmentation are needed.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: In Arizona the sightings of *Setophaga ruticilla* were on private land.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

REFERENCES:

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1957. Check-List of North American Birds. American Ornithologists' Union, Baltimore, Maryland, pp. 691.
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- Phillips, A. et al. 1964. The Birds of Arizona. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Arizona, pp.212.
- Sallabanks, R. 1993. Wings of the Americas/American Redstart. Copyright 1999 The Nature Conservancy. Accessed: <http://www.tnc.org/wings/wingresource/amre.html>.
- Terres, J.K., 1980. The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds. Alfred a. Knopf, New York, New York, pp. 1110.

MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

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