



# Nova Scotia Species At Risk Beneficial Management Practices Series

Version 1, March 2022

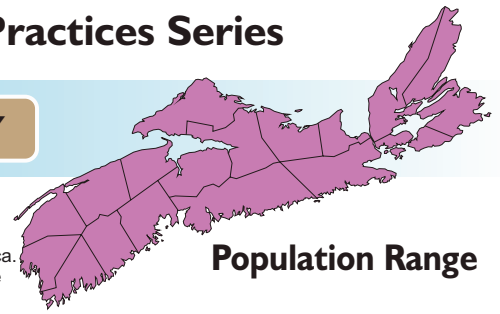
## Olive-sided Flycatcher

*Contopus cooperi*

STATUS

Threatened   
Threatened 

FORESTRY



Population Range

Found throughout Nova Scotia. Winter primarily in Central and South America. Declined by 79% over the last 40 years in Canada.



© RONNIE D'ENTREMONT

Olive-sided Flycatcher are often seen perched on snags and dead branches, or atop live black spruce, waiting to catch flying insects that pass by

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

- The Olive-sided Flycatcher is a medium-sized songbird, 18-20 cm length, with a large head, large dark bill, and short legs and tail.
- It is brownish olive-grey on its face and back.
- Their throat, centre of breast, and belly are whitish, and contrast against the dark patches on both sides of the breast (which resembles a vest). Their wings are dark and lack obvious white bars.
- Both sexes and juveniles are similar in appearance.
- Males can be easily identified by their loud, three-note whistle that sounds like “quick, three beers”.
- They forage from high perches, such as at the top of live spruce or snags or dead tips at the top of live trees. They fly out to snatch insects and return to a perch.

### HABITAT DESCRIPTION

- Olive-sided Flycatchers have a preference for spruce swamps and coniferous forest edges along wet openings like meadows, rivers, bogs, and ponds.
- In Nova Scotia, their habitat typically is dominated by Black Spruce, but may also include Red Spruce, Balsam Fir, White Pine, Eastern Hemlock and Tamarack, and has a relatively open canopy.



© CINDY STALCER

Typical Olive-sided Flycatcher coniferous forest habitat, dominated by mature black spruce and with a relatively open canopy, abundant snags, and a ground cover of heath shrubs

- They can also be found in disturbed areas such as early post-fire landscapes. Fires create patchy habitat and leave snags, which can be used for perching.
- Nests are often located on the edge of a forested area associated with a wetland area, such as a bog.
- Nests are usually built in mature coniferous trees, especially spruce, high off the ground, near the end of a tree limb.

### THREATS

- Habitat loss and alteration on both breeding and wintering grounds.
- Forestry practices, including clearcutting and even-aged planting.
- Large-scale declines in the availability of flying insect prey due to factors including acid rain, climate change, and pesticides. At a local scale, prey availability can be impacted by widespread spraying of pesticides that impact non-target insect species.





Nesting habitat, with an Olive-sided Flycatcher nest present in the area indicated by the yellow circle

© ALANA WESTWOOD

## HOW YOU CAN HELP (BENEFICIAL PRACTICES)

- Learn to identify Olive-sided Flycatcher and report all observations (see “Report Sightings”).
- Avoid harvesting or silvicultural activities during the nesting season (May 15- August 15).
- Harvest on frozen ground to minimize rutting and compaction which negatively impacts soil health and can alter hydrology.
- Avoid harvesting up to the edge of wetlands; leave a buffer at least 50 m wide around open wet areas or wetlands that are surrounded by conifers. When applicable, retain mature spruce within this buffer zone.
- Avoid activities that will alter wetland hydrology. For guidance, see “Resource Roads and Wetlands: A Guide for Planning, Construction and Maintenance”  
<https://boreal.ducks.ca/publications/resource-roads-and-wetlands-a-guide-for-planning-construction-and-maintenance/>
- Use uneven aged forest management systems when possible. Leave clumps of tall trees standing in cut-over areas; the availability of perches is an important factor in habitat selection.
- Maintain or increase the amount of dead woody debris in stands:
  - Leave all snags that do not pose a safety threat;
  - Leaving snags is especially important near ponds, meadows, and open areas where Olive-sided Flycatchers are likely to use the snags as hunting perches;
  - Leave coarse and fine woody debris on the ground.
- Maintain open meadow habitat where it abutts coniferous forest stands as they can be prime feeding sites.
- Avoid use of pesticides and herbicides in or near swamps, bogs, and other wetlands. One of the Olive-sided Flycatcher's preferred foods are bees, which pollinate deciduous flowering shrubs; applying herbicides kills these shrubs and removes the bees' food source.
- Ensure you are familiar with the Pesticide Regulations made under the Nova Scotia Environment Act.
- Limit beaver trapping where they are not damaging roads or high value timber, as they create irregular wet habitats used by Olive-sided Flycatcher.

## KEY TERMS

### Aerial insectivore:

A guild of birds that feed by capturing flying insects. This guild includes whip-poor-wills, nighthawks, swifts, swallows, martins and flycatchers.

### Silviculture:

The science and art of cultivating forest crops and, more particularly, the theory and practice of controlling the establishment, composition, constitution and growth of forests.

### Hydrology:

The science of the properties of the Earth's water, including its occurrence, movement and distribution. Hydrological processes can take place on the surface or underground. For example, forests help slow-down the movement of surface water from rain or snowmelt, allowing it to absorb into the soil and prevent erosion.

## REPORT SIGHTINGS

When possible, report any of your observations of species at risk. Details such as time, date, location (Geographic or UTM coordinates) as well as photos are valuable additions to all reports.

**Contact:** 1-866-727-3447, [sightings@speciesatrisk.ca](mailto:sightings@speciesatrisk.ca) AND the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, [biodiversity@novascotia.ca](mailto:biodiversity@novascotia.ca).

### Project Partners:



## TO LEARN MORE

To learn more about the Olive-sided Flycatcher or other species at risk view the **Species at Risk in Nova Scotia, Identification and Information Guide** available online at <http://www.sarguide.speciesatrisk.ca>

**Landbird Species At Risk In Forested Landscapes** website: <http://landbirdsar.merseytobeatic.ca/>

To learn more about reducing risk to migratory birds review Environment and Climate Change Canada's “**Guidelines to Reduce Risk to Migratory Birds**” available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/avoiding-harm-migratory-birds/reduce-risk-migratory-birds.html>

### Additional resources for woodlots with Olive-sided Flycatcher:

Kotliar, N.B. (2007). Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*): a technical conservation assessment. USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region. [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5182039.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5182039.pdf)

Content and design from the **Species at Risk in Nova Scotia, Identification & Information Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition** used with permission of Mersey Tobetic Research Institute.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et  
Changement climatique Canada

