

Olive-Sided Flycatcher

(Contopus cooperi)

Appearance This medium-sized flycatcher is slightly larger than a house sparrow. It has a dull grayish-brown head and upperparts and a whitish throat and belly. The olive-sided flycatcher can be distinguished from other flycatchers by its grayish-brown upper breast divided by a narrow, white centerline, giving it the appearance of wearing a vest. The white sides of the rump can be distinctive when perched, but this feature is often hidden by folded wings.

Range Coniferous forests in the northern United States and Canada, and the Rocky Mountains south nearly to the Mexican border, are home to nesting olive-sided flycatchers. In Minnesota they are an uncommon breeding bird in forests of the northeastern and north-central regions.

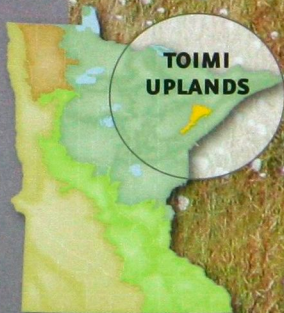
Migration Most olive-sided flycatchers winter in the mountains of South America. One of many bird species known as neotropical migrants, olive-sided flycatchers migrate through the United States in spring and fall, but even during migration they are uncommon throughout Minnesota. In spring they are late migrants, usually appearing in early May. Migrating birds are sometimes seen in southern Minnesota into the first week of June. During this time, they can be seen in deciduous forests, often at the edges of clearings. Olive-sided flycatchers usually perch conspicuously atop tall snags or dead branches.

Habitat Olive-sided flycatchers prefer lowland forests, but they also use uplands. They favor forest edges or other areas with sparse trees and snags or other suitable perches. The edges of clear-cuts with standing dead trees can also provide habitat for olive-sided flycatchers, particularly when lowland coniferous forest remains nearby.

Song Their characteristic song consists of three emphatic, slurred notes—often described as *quick-three-beers*. The first two notes rise in pitch, ending with a longer, down-slurred note. This flycatcher also makes a series of rapid *pip-pip* calls, all on the same pitch.

Status Olive-sided flycatchers are uncommon, sparsely distributed breeding birds in Minnesota. In Minnesota's comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy, the olive-sided flycatcher has been identified as a species in greatest conservation need. Nationwide the bird's population has declined by 50 percent or more during the past 30 years.

Steve Stucker, ornithologist
DNR Minnesota County Biological Survey



a closer look at CRITICAL HABITAT

The olive-sided flycatcher occurs in 14 of the 25 ecological subsections highlighted in *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife*, including the Toimi Uplands. This small pocket of elevated drumlin fields and rolling hills between the North Shore Highlands and Tamarack Lowlands contains the sources of several rivers, including the St. Louis, Cloquet, and Whitefish. To read more about the region and its conservation priorities, visit www.dnr.state.mn.us/cwcs/subsection_profiles.html.