

Yellow-Breasted Chat / *Icteria virens*



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Cultural Importance

The yellow-breasted chat is a seasonal migrant that features in Karuk stories in which it welcomed as the true harbinger of spring (Salter 2003). The yellow feathers of its breast have traditionally been a part of tribal regalia.

Life Cycle & Habitat

This migratory species depends on riparian areas, especially sandbars, in which willows and cottonwoods predominate. It nests in dense thickets, while it uses the larger trees as singing perches (Dunn and Garrett 1997). It feeds primarily on insects and wild fruit (Myers n.d.). While this chat is not endangered federally, in California it is listed as a species of special concern (Myers n.d.)

Yellow-Breasted Chat and Fire

In the California desert, fire had a short-term impact on yellow-breasted chats in that it prevented nesting on the year of the fire, but the population returned to pre-burn number three years later (Cardiff 1993, 1996). The habitat on which this chat depends is comprised of early seral species that benefit from disturbance such as fire. Without fire, conifers can encroach riparian areas, competing with willows and cottonwoods for light and water reducing the chat's preferred habitat.

Effects of High Severity Fire Across Time

Immediate	2-Year	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires that occur just before or during nesting season can affect survivability and reproductive success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires can temporarily reduce perching snags, but creates new ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased frequency of high severity fires could modify chat habitat
Sources: Cardiff 1993, 1996	Sources:	Sources:

Effects of Karuk Cultural Burning Across Time

Immediate	2-Year	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural burning of riparian areas may be timed to avoid nesting season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conifers have been held back by burn, and willow, cottonwood, etc. are given space to thrive post-disturbance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burning at proper intervals keeps the habitat viable for chat by promoting early seral species in riparian areas.
Sources:	Sources:	Sources:

Effects of Federal Fire Management Strategies on Species' Climate Change and Fire Resilience

Prior to Fire	During Fire	After Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suppression allows for coniferous encroachment of riparian areas, compromising the stability of chat habitat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire suppression water with drawl activities (helicopter dipping, water tender pumping) can disrupt chat foraging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large extensive burned riparian valley forests can remove or degrade preferred chat habitat
Sources:	Sources:	Sources: