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DCP QUARTERLY REPORT

VENDOR / AGENCY SWCA Environmental Consultants

PROJECT CONTACT INFORMATION

Name Sarah Nichols
Title Project Manager
Address 8235 South Eastern Avenue, Suite 100
Las Vegas, Nevada 89123
Phone Number (734) 216-2048
Email Address sarah.nichols@swca.com

PROJECT TITLE Parasitism Control and Evaluation
PROJECT NUMBER 2019-SWCA-1935A
REPORTING PERIOD 7/1/2026 through 9/30/2026

QUESTION 1

What did you accomplish during this reporting period? How did these help you meet your objectives of your project? If relevant, what indicators or benchmarks were used to determine your progress?

From July 1 through September 30, SWCA concluded brown-headed cowbird (Molothrus ater) (cowbird) control at Mesquite West, finished flycatcher territory and nest monitoring efforts at Mesquite West, and conducted the last two rounds of southwestern willow flycatcher (Empidonax traillii extimus) (flycatcher) surveys at Mormon Mesa Parcel 5-A and the western portion of Mesquite West. Preliminary findings for the 2026 field season were presented at the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Annual Progress Report Symposium on August 31.

The goals of this project were to maintain and/or improve habitat for flycatcher and to help identify lands where habitat enhancement may be implemented to expand habitat for the flycatcher. A combined-method cowbird control program, first implemented in 2021, was continued through 2026 to meet the objective of conducting cowbird control at Mesquite West in an attempt to decrease parasitism rates and increase flycatcher nest success. The combined-method cowbird control program continued the practices of cowbird egg addling or replacement, nestling removal, and adult female removal via target netting at Mesquite West. Protocol-level flycatcher surveys and intensive territory and nest monitoring were completed to fulfill the stated project objectives of conducting flycatcher surveys and monitoring at Mesquite West and Mormon Mesa. Flycatcher territory and nest monitoring at Mesquite West included documenting nest successes and failures and parasitism by cowbirds, which are also project objectives. In 2026, no flycatchers were detected at Mormon Mesa; therefore, no monitoring was conducted at that site. Flycatchers were detected and monitoring was conducted at Mesquite West and south of Bunkerville East Parcel 2-B.

Several metrics were used to determine project progress: number of female cowbirds removed via target netting as part of the combined-method cowbird control program, cowbird parasitism rates, flycatcher nest success, productivity (fledglings per nest that contained at least one flycatcher egg and had a known outcome), and fecundity (fledglings per female for which all nest outcomes were known). In 2026, four female cowbirds were removed via target netting. Despite the low number of female cowbirds captured, no nests were parasitized; therefore, egg addling and nestling removal protocols were not utilized. The average rate of cowbird parasitism on flycatcher nests during the cowbird netting period (2021-2026) was 17%, which is a 38% decrease from the 55% average observed during the pre-netting period (2016-2020).

Preliminary results show that nest success was 50% in 2026, marking the fourth time during the six-year cowbird netting period that nest success met or exceeded 50%. Nest success averaged 53% over the 6-year cowbird netting period (2021-2026), which is a 37% increase over the 16% nest success

rate observed during the pre-netting years (2016-2020). During all pre-netting years (2003-2020), nest success averaged above 50% during only one 6-year period: 2003 through 2008. This period included 5 years in which SWCA conducted cowbird trapping and 1 year following the trapping period; average nest success was 51%.

Preliminary data analysis shows that productivity was 1.29 fledglings per nest and fecundity was 1.50 fledglings per female in 2026. Average productivity increased from 0.43 fledglings per nest in 2016-2020 to 1.13 fledglings per nest in 2021-2026. Average fecundity increased from 0.64 fledglings per female in 2016-2020 to 1.59 fledglings per female in 2021-2026.

QUESTION 2

What, if any, problems were encountered? Briefly describe those problems and the manner in which they were dealt.

No problems were encountered in 2026.

QUESTION 3

What, if any, proposed activities were not completed? Briefly describe those activities, the reasons they were not completed and your plans for carrying them out.

All proposed activies have been completed at Mesquite West. No flycatcher monitoring was conducted at Mormon Mesa Parcel 5-A due to lack of flycatcher detections in 2026. A contract amendment was processed and funds were reallocated to flycatcher monitoring at Bunkerville after a flycatcher was detected south of Bunkerville East Parcel 2-B.

QUESTION 4

What is the calculated percent of work completed?

As of September 30, SWCA estimates that approximately 85% of work required for this project for 2026 has been completed.

QUESTION 5

Do you foresee any upcoming problems with future project activities? If so, how do you propose to overcome those problems?

No, we do not foresee any upcoming problems with this project.

QUESTION 6

Is there anything else you want to tell the DCP about this project?

This project has been important in developing a combined-method cowbird control system that has proven successful in reducing cowbird parasitism on flycatcher nests and improving flycatcher nest success, productivity, and fecundity in a flycatcher breeding site in southern Nevada that has been occupied for decades. This combined-method cowbird control program has shown to be effective in improving all above-mentioned metrics, and it should be implemented in other flycatcher nesting locations in the southwest to improve flycatcher metrics throughout the subspecies range. Should flycatcher metrics continue to improve in southern Nevada, habitat enhancement and restoration will be important in ensuring suitable habitat for a possible increase in flycatcher population.

QUESTION 7

What was produced during the reporting period?

For this reporting period, SWCA produced two Data Deliverables (D37 and D39) which were submitted on July 5 and August 5, respectively, and a Quarterly Report (D38) covering the period from April 1 through June 30, which was submitted to the DCP on July 5.