AVIAN COMMUNITY MONITORING IN THE GRAND CANYON

1995 Progress Report

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Principle Investigators:	Terry May, Graduate Studies and Research, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011 and Charles van Riper III, National Biological Service, Colorado Plateau Research Station, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011
Government Technical Representative:	John Ray, Resources Management, Grand Canyon National Park
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Prepared By:	Mark K. Sogge, Ecologist; David Felley, Research Specialist; Helen Yard, Research Technician; and Patricia Hodgetts, Research Technician.

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General Introduction

Avian communities along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon[1] have changed significantly since completion of Glen Canyon Dam. Once warm, sediment-laden and free-flowing, the Colorado River was transformed into a cold, clear, flow-regulated river. The extent of daily flow rate fluctuations increased, and as a result river level elevation changed as much as 2-3 meters daily in some areas. Also, reduced sediment load influenced beach formation and erosion, and scouring of the lower riparian zone. Because of these and other changes, riparian habitat characteristics were dramatically altered, with an overall increase in the amount of riparian vegetation. These habitat changes have caused changes in the canyon bird community as well (Brown et al. 1987, Carothers and Brown 1991).

Although some of the most dramatic changes to the riparian avifauna along the river corridor may have already occurred, future operation of Glen Canyon Dam may continue to have significant effects far into the future. The fluctuating flows released from the dam could have both direct and indirect impacts on the bird community. Direct (short-term) impacts could occur if birds or their nests are drowned, or if the nest substrate is destroyed. Indirect (long-term) impacts could arise primarily from flow-induced changes in riparian habitat (eg., distribution, amount, patch size, composition, and structure) or avian food resources.

In 1991, the Bureau of Reclamation modified the operation of Glen Canyon Dam by adopting an interim flow operations program that included a reduced operation regime (reduced fluctuation levels and flow rates) with specific changes in maximum flows and daily flow fluctuations. Interim flows were initiated in the hopes of reducing negative impacts to the biological, cultural, and physical resources of the Grand Canyon. An interim flow monitoring program was also initiated in 1991, with the intent to determine if the interim flow regime was actually reducing these impacts.

In 1992, the National Biological Service Colorado Plateau Research Station (at that time a unit of the National Park Service) was asked to carry out an avian monitoring project for the Bureau of Reclamation's interim flow monitoring program, in order to examine the potential of both direct and indirect impacts. Such data would provide resource managers and decision makers with the information needed to make resource and operation decisions.

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[1]Note that the Grand Canyon, as used in this report, includes the Colorado River corridor from Glen Canyon Dam downstream to Diamond Creek. Thus, the area we call the Grand Canyon includes portions of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Hualapai Tribe lands, Navajo Nation lands, and Grand Canyon National Park.

This project was designed to emphasize the following objectives:

1. determine the direct impacts of Glen Canyon Dam interim flow operations on the nests and nesting of riparian birds along the Colorado River Corridor.

2. investigate possible long-term effects of Glen Canyon Dam flows by documenting patterns of avian use of riparian habitats, particularly with regard to bird species composition and habitat patch size/vegetative composition.

We also felt that it was important to develop and test methodologies that would allow resource managers to monitor the status of the bird communities along the river, in order to detect and react to changes in species composition or population levels. Furthermore, in order to better interpret and understand changes in the avian community, it would be necessary to understand the resident status, migratory patterns, and habitat use of the birds using the riparian corridor. Therefore, our project also included efforts directed at the following objectives:

3. determine the residence status and movements of bird species using the Colorado River riparian corridor (e.g., do individuals stay within the canyon, and do they move between habitat patches).

4. develop and test methodologies suitable for the long-term monitoring of avian population levels and distribution within the river corridor.

5. document patterns of insect abundance in riparian habitats and in the diets of common insectivorous birds, in order to better understand how terrestrial birds use the aquatic and terrestrial food resources.

Past research, some of it associated with GCES Phase I, documented the overall composition and general distribution of bird species or communities within the Grand Canyon (Carothers and Sharber 1976, Brown 1988, Brown et al. 1987, Sogge and Tibbitts 1992) or looked at the direct (flooding) impacts of previous flow regimes (Brown and Johnson 1987). However, our avian monitoring project is the first designed specifically to meet all of the objectives listed above.

This is the last progress report associated with this avian community monitoring project. The first progress report (Sogge et al. 1994) reported the nature and status of project efforts in 1993 and 1994. This current 1995 report is not intended to be, nor should it be interpreted as, a final report. Additional data remains to be synthesized, analyzed and presented in the final project report (due in 1996). This progress report summarizes our monitoring efforts in 1995, and is organized by chapters that address each of the study objectives. Each chapter is organized into sections that introduce the specific topic, outline our methods, and report our progress. Only common names of bird species are used throughout the text of this report - scientific names for all species are presented in Appendix 1.

Chapter 1. Determining direct impacts of interim flow operations on the nests and nesting of riparian birds.

Introduction

Since the completion of Glen Canyon Dam in 1963, the manipulation of river flows has allowed the development of new riparian habitat for breeding birds along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. This new high water zone (NHWZ) vegetation is dominated by salt cedar (*Tamarix chinensis*), seepwillow (*Baccharis salicifolia*), sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*), common reed (*Phragmites communis*), and cattail (*Typha* spp.). The NHWZ is very different from the old high water zone (OHWZ) vegetation dominated by catclaw (*Acacia greggii*), honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), and netleaf hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*: Turner and Karpiscak 1980). Brown and Johnson (1987) found that fluctuating flows directly affected birds breeding in this new environment by flooding active nests. Their study was conducted during a period of high daily fluctuations (sometimes over 2 m daily change in river level), and enormous seasonal fluctuations (e.g. high flows of 93,000 cubic feet/second [cfs] in June, 1993). They found that flows as high as 31,000 cfs (maximum power plant output from Glen Canyon Dam) flooded few nests, while flows over 40,000 cfs began having significant impacts on some riparian breeding species.

Under the Bureau of Reclamation's interim flow regime in operation from 1991 through 1995, peak flows could not exceed approximately 20,000 cfs and daily fluctuations were limited to between 5,000 and 8,000 cfs (USDI Bureau of Reclamation 1993). Given Brown and Johnson's (1987) findings that few nests were flooded until flows reached 40,000 cfs, flooding of active nests under the interim flows might be expected to be negligible. However, changes in riparian vegetation associated with interim flows have concentrated new vegetative growth in a narrower band near the river's edge (Stevens and Ayers 1994). Also, the relationship between daily and seasonal variations in river stage under interim flows may influence nest inundation more than the maximum daily or seasonal stage alone. These factors may have effects that were not seen in earlier studies on the riparian breeding birds.

In order to determine if interim flows were flooding nests of riparian birds, we conducted searches for bird nests along the river corridor from 1993 through 1995. We concentrated on NHWZ habitats in the hydrologically active zone (HAZ), the area potentially inundated by flows between the low water mark and the high 20,000 cfs flows. We monitored all nests to see if nest inundation occurred. In this way we were be able to determine how many of the nests that we found were below river stage at 20,000 cfs (i.e., how many nests were potentially in danger of inundation).

Methodology

We conducted nest searches at five direct-impact study sites (Figure 1-1): Lees Ferry (RM 0.0 R, above and below the boat ramp), Triple Alcoves above Saddle Canyon (RM 46.7 R), Stairway Canyon (RM 171.0 R; 1993 only), above Parashant Wash (RM 198.0 R), and Spring Canyon (204.5 R; 1994 and 1995). We concentrated our nest search efforts in the projected HAZ at each site, and looked for nests from May through July, 1993; March through July, 1994; and March through June 1995. Nest searches were conducted following the protocol of Martin and Guepel (1993), where observations of bird behavior, especially during nest construction and brood-rearing, were used to locate active nests. We also monitored all nests found during other field activities, but outside the HAZ. Data collected at the nest site included date found, river mile, species, stage of nest development, number of eggs or young, description and sketch of the nest site, habitat type (NHWZ, OHWZ, upland), nest substrate (i.e. what nest was built on), height above ground, distance to water, distance above water, and water depth below nest (when applicable). Nests were revisited on following trips to determine nest fate and number of eggs or young when nest was revisited.

Because no hydrological model currently existed to accurately define the relationship between flows from Glen Canyon Dam and river stage (elevation) at each of our study sites, we intended to determine the relationships between nest placement, river stage, and water releases by following the methods of Brown and Johnson (1987). We measured peak daily river stage with a staff gage vertically referenced to a permanent point at each direct impact study site. River stage relative to this point could then be related to river flow by back-dating to the corresponding peak flows at the Lees Ferry gaging station, or the nearest upstream gage if tributaries were flooding. However, one of our river trips in 1995 corresponded with a relatively constant release of approximately 20,000 cfs. This allowed us to directly determine the location of the upper limit of the HAZ at each site.

Progress to Date

We located a total of 100 nests, representing 20 different species, in the NHWZ and OHWZ habitats along the river corridor from 1993 to 1995 (Table 1-1). Thirty of these belonged to "obligate riparian birds" (Brown and Johnson 1987), those species which nest only in NHWZ vegetation (Bell's Vireo, Bewick's Wren, Blue Grosbeak, Common Yellowthroat, Great-tailed Grackle, Lesser Goldfinch, Mallard, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Yellow Warbler). Overall, only one[2] of these 100 nests (a Common Yellowthroat in 1994) was located within the HAZ at any of the major study sites, and this nest did not fail due to inundation (Sogge et al. 1994). None of the 37 nests found in 1995 were within the HAZ (Table 1-2).

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[2]Sogge et al. (1994) reported a preliminary estimate of three nests within the HAZ. However, more accurate delineation in 1995 of the upper level of the HAZ showed that two of these three nests were actually above the 20,000 cfs level.

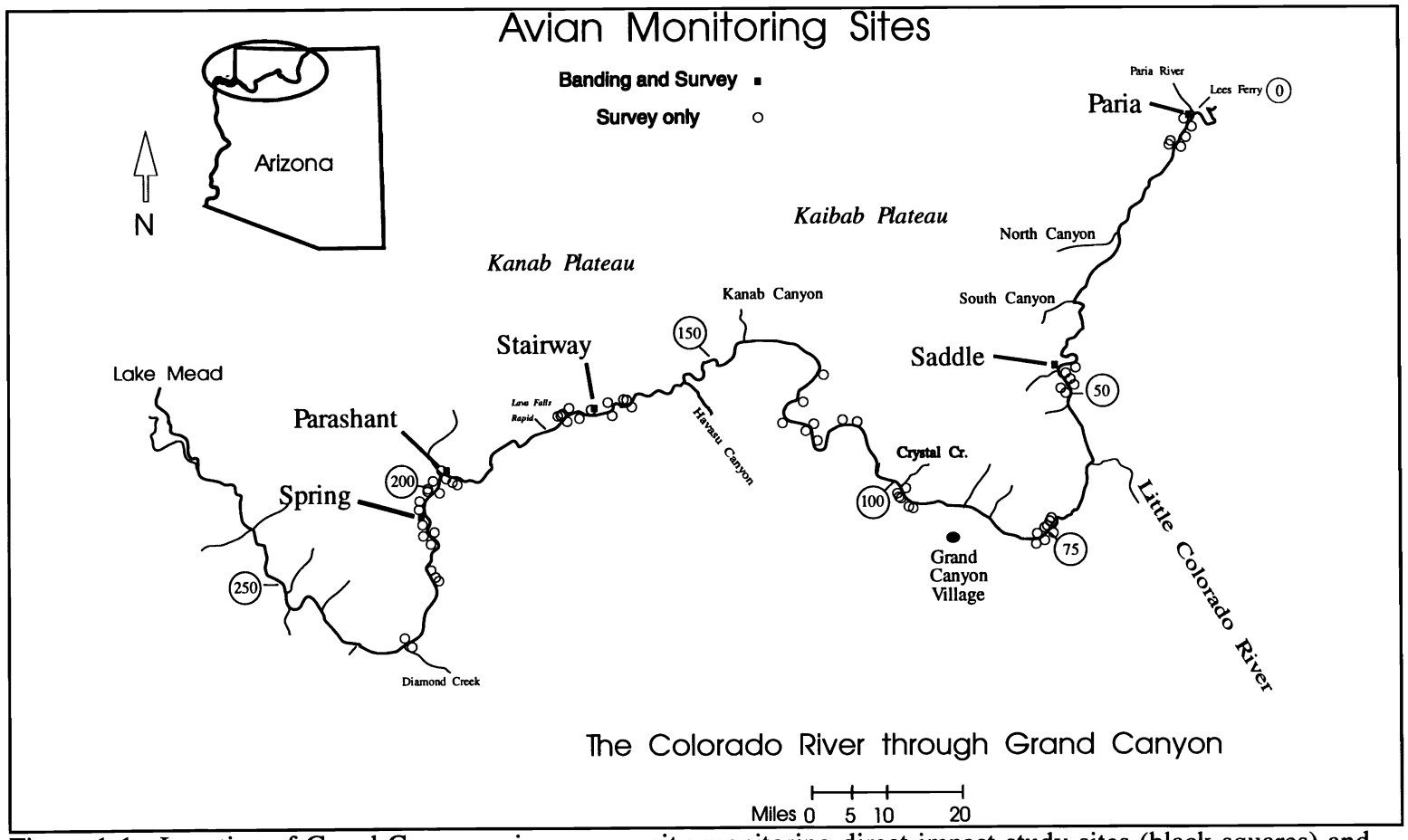

Figure 1-1. Location of Grand Canyon avian community monitoring direct impact study sites (black squares) and survey sites (open circles) in the Grand Canyon.

Table 1-1. Bird species and number of nests found in riparian habitat along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park, 1993-95.

Species nesting	Number	Species nesting	Number
Mallard	1	Lucy's Warbler	7
Mourning Dove	4	Yellow Warbler	5
Black-chinned Hummingbird	14	Common Yellowthroat	5
Black Phoebe	8	Yellow-breasted Chat	3
Say's Phoebe	2	Blue Grosbeak	3
Ash-throated Flycatcher	1	Great-tailed Grackle	1
Verdin	2	Northern Oriole	1
Bushtit	1	Hooded Oriole	1
Bewick's Wren	3	Lesser Goldfinch	1
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	13	Unknown	2
Bell's Vireo	22	Total	100

Table 1-2. Results of nest searches in the hydrologically active zone (HAZ) at direct impact study sites in Grand Canyon National Park, 1995. Results for 1993-1994 are presented in Sogge et al. (1994).

Site	Search hours in HAZ	# nests found in HAZ	# nests found out of HAZ	# of total nests that were "riparian obligates"
Lee's Ferry	30.0	0	3	0
Saddle	37.5	0	11	4
Parashant	34.0	0	4	3
Spring	36.5	0	4	2
Total	138.0	0	22	9

Chapter 2. Determining possible long-term effects of Glen Canyon Dam flows on riparian birds.

Introduction

Possibly the most important long-term effects of dam management on riparian birds in the Canyon will be due to changes in the OHWZ and NHWZ riparian habitats. In conjunction with detailed vegetation studies, bird surveys can shed light on avian habitat relationships. Habitat use is most appropriately studied during the breeding season when most resident passerines live on and defend relatively small territories at specific sites or locales. By documenting the breeding bird community at specific habitat patches, and the physical and vegetative characteristics of these patches, we can develop wildlife-habitat relationship models for individual species and for the avian community as a whole. Using these models, managers will be able to predict changes in the riparian avian community based on predictions of future riparian habitat changes.

Methodology

Study sites

We selected a total of 71 patches (1993-1995 combined) of riparian vegetation on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon between Lee's Ferry (RM 0) and Diamond Creek (RM 226; refer to Fig.1-1 and Appendix 2). These study sites were selected to represent a wide range of sizes, vegetative structure, and locations within the Canyon. Study sites varied in size from 0.01 ha to over 2 ha, with most less than 0.2 ha. The number and location of study sites in the Canyon was constrained by the logistics of travel time between sites, and the need to initiate all bird surveys before 1000 hrs.

Bird surveys

We conducted simultaneous walking and floating surveys at each site during four river trips in 1995 (March, April, May, and June). One observer walked through the site, slightly behind a raft carrying one or two floating observers. Floating surveys used a 22-foot or 37-foot motorized raft with the motor off. All observers, floating or walking, attempted to make a complete count of all birds occupying the patch. All surveys were conducted between one-half hour before sunrise and 1000 hrs, a time of high bird activity. Data recorded by each observer included date, site location, start and stop time, length of survey, estimated wind speed, cloud cover, and quality of float. Data collected on the birds included species, number observed, type of detection (aural or visual), sex and age when possible, behavior, and habitat use. Additionally, spot-maps (I.B.C.C. 1970) of some species were made at RM 46.7 R and RM 198.0 R.

Bird Community

The breeding bird community at each study site was identified by integrating data from floating and walking surveys, notes of birds observed in the patch before or after surveys, and banding data at the five direct-impact study sites. Most sites were visited once per river trip, with four trips during the 1995 field season. We integrated data from simultaneous walking and floating surveys to produce a list of bird species and abundance for each site and visit. To avoid double-counting birds when estimating abundance, we used only the highest count of a species by any observer during each survey. Because a singing bird usually represents an occupied territory, one singing bird was counted as one breeding pair.

We then compared and integrated lists from all visits in one year to each site, in order to produce one complete list of breeding bird species and abundance for each site in that year. A species was considered a breeder when it was present at a site on two consecutive visits (during the breeding season), when an active nest was found, when an identifiable used nest was found, when recently fledged young were found, when a brood patch was observed on a mist-netted bird, and/or when adults were seen carrying nesting material, food, or fecal sacs. When estimating a species abundance in a patch, we separated migrants and young-of-year birds from breeders on a species-by-species basis, using information on breeding behavior and the phenology of breeding and migration. Generally, the highest count during a species' breeding period was used to estimate numbers of breeding pairs. The breeding period of each species was determined from Brown et al. (1984), field observations of nests and young, and the presence of brood patches and cloacal protuberances from banding data. High counts occurring after the breeding season were attributed to young-of-year birds or post-breeding dispersal and were not used to estimate abundance. For species which migrate through the Canyon as well as breed there (especially the Yellow-breasted Chat, Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow Warbler), estimating breeding abundance was more complicated. Phenology of migration for these species was estimated from banding data, and high counts from surveys during the peak of migration were not used to estimate abundance. When breeding and migration overlapped, the second highest count from all visits was used.

Bird Habitat

Each survey site was delineated on a 1:4,800 color aerial photograph. We stratified vegetation by coarse vegetative composition and structure, then delineated strata on enlarged aerial photographs while visiting each site. Vegetation strata were named after the dominant plant species in most cases, though combinations (e.g. willow-arrowweed) and dominant physiographic features (e.g. debris fan) were also used. We based our data collection of vegetation structure and floristics on the delineated vegetation strata. Table 2-1 summarizes the types of structural and vegetational data collected for each strata in 1995. This approach differed from the measurements made in 1993 and 1994 (Sogge et al. 1994), which relied more heavily on quadrat-based measurements within each vegetation strata.

Table 2-1. Vegetation and habitat variables measured in association with the Grand Canyon avian community monitoring projects in Colorado River riparian habitats in Grand Canyon National Park, 1995.

Sampling unit	Unit location	Type of data collected	Variables measured
Habitat Patch		Physical characteristics	Georeferenced location (UTM) Slope and aspect Size (aerial extent) and Shape Factor
Habitat Patch		Delineation of discernable vegetation strata, defined by dominant species.	Georeferenced coordinates Size (aerial extent) and Shape Factor Susbstrate heterogeneity Substrate (eg., sand, rock, etc.)
Delineated Strata	Within each habitat patch	For each vegetation layer: Tree Shrub Herbaceous Ground cover For each species:	 Braun-Blanquet cover estimate mean height layer top mean height layer bottom max height layer top Braun-Blanquet cover estimate mean maximum height of species dispersion (high, medium, or low)

Progress to Date

Bird surveys

We conducted 291 surveys at 59 sites in 1995 (including some of the sites surveyed in 1993-94). Preliminary results reported here focus on March through June, 1995 (although some analyses include 1993 and 1994 data). We detected 88 species in 1995; more than were found in 1993 (43 species) or 1994 (78 species; Sogge et al. 1994). We observed a total of 104 species using riparian habitats along the river corridor from 1993 through 1995 (Appendix 1).

Bird Communities

The breeding bird communities have been assigned to all 59 of the 1995 sites, using data from surveys and banding efforts (see Chapter 3). Additional information from pre- and post-survey observations, and field notes remain to be included.

Bird Habitat

We have completed habitat measurements, ground-truthed aerial photos, and delineated major vegetation strata at all survey sites from 1993 through 1995. Data entry is complete for 1993 and 1994 data. We are currently entering 1994 vegetation data into standard database files. We have collected GPS locations at all study sites and have georeferenced (including differential correction) all patches and vegetation strata, with the data stored in ArcInfo.

Chapter 3. Determining residency status and movements of bird species using the riparian corridor.

Introduction

Riparian habitats along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park provide breeding habitat, migratory stopover sites, and wintering areas for birds throughout the year (Brown et al. 1987). The resources a bird requires to produce young or survive the winter may be very different from those needed for a migratory stopover. To understand habitat use in this context, we must be able to distinguish between local breeders, winter residents, and spring and fall migrants. By capturing and individually marking birds, we may determine breeding status, migration phenology, and residency patterns of the different species found along the river corridor.

Site fidelity (the degree to which migratory birds return to specific locations year-to-year) and philopatry (the tendency for birds to return to the place where they hatched) both relate to management of Glen Canyon Dam and its effects on the riparian habitat of the river corridor. Weins and Rotenberry (1985) found that breeding site fidelity and philopatry remained high for several years after vegetation removal. If the same is true for species breeding in the Canyon, then changes in breeding bird densities may lag behind changes in riparian habitat. Also, a higher degree of site fidelity means that breeding bird populations may be less flexible at responding to rapid changes in the riparian habitat of the river corridor. By marking birds with color bands unique to their site of capture, we can document important patterns of site fidelity, philopatry, and local movement between patches.

We mist-netted and color-banded birds at four riparian sites in the Canyon during 1995 to determine residency status, site fidelity, philopatry, and movement patterns along the Colorado River within the Grand Canyon. By noting the color of bands and the identification of recaptured birds on successive trips, it was possible to infer if individuals stayed in a patch in successive months, and if they moved among vegetation patches. Results of 1993 and 1994 capture and banding efforts were reported in Sogge et al. (1994).

Methodology

We used mist nests to capture birds at each of the four direct impact study sites (refer to Fig. 1-1). Each bird was fitted with a numbered U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum leg band and a site-specific color band. We recorded the number and location of each net, as well as the number of hours each net was open. This provided a standard index of capture rate per unit effort.

We mist-netted for three days at each of the four study sites on each trip. Nets were set up the previous evening and opened after the morning avian monitoring survey was completed. Nets remained open for a minimum of four hours per morning and longer if we were still catching birds. In 1995, 11 nets were placed in fixed locations at each site. Each bird was

banded and its wing chord length, tail length, tarsus length, culmen length, and weight were measured. Each bird was aged, sexed, and checked for external parasites. If a bird was recaptured, its band number, marker band color, date, time, and breeding condition were recorded. Birds recaptured more than once per visit at the same site were only counted once in the totals for returned and recaptured birds.

All four banding sites were in large vegetation patches. Whenever possible, nets were placed in all available habitats: tamarisk, willow, arrowweed, mesquite and acacia (Table 3-1). Of the four banding sites, only Paria is without any Old High Water Zone (OHWZ) vegetation.

Table 3-1. Vegetative zone of mist-net placement at each site

Zone	Paria	Saddle	Parashant	Spring	Total
Old High Water Zone			2	5	7
New High Water Zone	11	8	1	2	22
Mixture of OHWZ and NHWZ		3	8	4	15
TOTAL	11	11	11	11	

Progress to Date

During 2,667 net-hours in 1995, we caught 680 birds, including 220 recaptured birds, hummingbirds (which were immediately released without banding or measurements), and escapees (Table 3-2). We banded 46 species for a total of 463 individuals (Appendix 3). The most abundant breeding species were Lucy's Warbler and Bell's Vireo (Figure 3-1).

Table 3-2. Net hours and capture information for mist-netting birds along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon from March through June 1995.

Site	Mist net hours	# of species caught	# of birds banded	# of recaptures, hummingbirds, and escapees from nets	Birds per 100 net hours
Paria *	940	31	142	68	22
Saddle	475	16	31	38	16
Parashant	662	27	121	57	27
Spring	591	29	166	57	38
Total	2,667	49	460	220	25

* includes data from banding efforts in January and February at the Paria site.

We recaptured 57 different birds, representing 13 species. These included 41 return breeding birds and three natal returns (Table 3-3). Based on our banding data, the majority of breeding neotropical migrants returned to the canyon in May. By June, many young-of-the-year birds are moving about in riparian vegetation, contributing to high capture rates in that month (Figure 3-1).

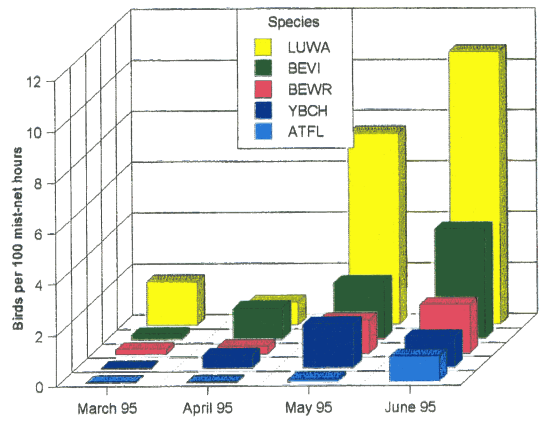

Figure 3-1. The number of breeding and young-of-the-year birds captured (of the five most common riparian breeding species) along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, 1995. LUWA = Lucy's Warbler; BEVI = Bell's Vireo; BEWR = Bewick's Wren; YBCH = Yellow-breaseted Chat; ATFL = Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Table 3-3. Breeding and natal birds banded in 1993 or 1994 which returned to the same study site in 1995.

Species	Paria	Saddle	Parashant	Spring	Total
Ash-throated Flycatcher		3	2		5
Bewick's Wren	3	3	2		8
Bell's Vireo			6	4	10
Lucy's Warbler		7	4	3	14
Yellow Warbler		1	1		2
Yellow-breasted Chat		1	3	1	5
Total	3	15	18	8	44

Riparian habitats of the Colorado River are used by many migratory species. Peak numbers pass through the river corridor in May (Figure 3-2). Warblers are by far the most frequently captured migratory birds, with high numbers in May. Sparrows and most other migrants are highest in April and May.

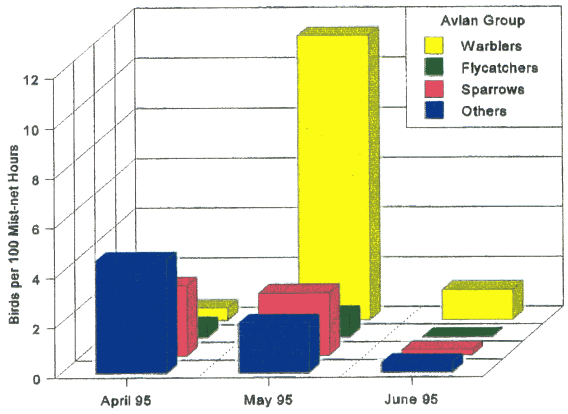

Figure 3-2. Migrating birds (by taxonomic group) banded along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon in 1995.

We caught our first Indigo Bunting of the project at Spring Canyon in May and a second one in June at the same site. Both birds were second year males with a developed cloacal protuberance, singing continuously throughout their respective territories. Other new species banded included Mourning Dove and Gray Vireo at Paria and Red-winged Blackbird at Parashant. We also caught two fledgling Song Sparrows at Spring Canyon in May, the first verification of breeding for that species at that site.

Although we frequently saw birds fly between habitat patches located across the river, we found little evidence of bird movement more than about 100 meters upstream or downstream of a site. Thus, resident birds appear to have high site fidelity with respect to their breeding territory, within a breeding season.

Chapter 4. Testing techniques suitable for long-term avian monitoring.

Introduction

Riparian vegetation along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park is affected by management of Glen Canyon Dam (Anderson and Ruffner 1988, Stevens and Ayers 1994, Turner and Karpiscak 1980). Some species of birds are highly dependent on this habitat (riparian obligate species) and may likewise be affected by dam management. Because this avian community is a valuable resource in the Grand Canyon, it is desirable to monitor population levels of these birds to provide feedback for effective management.

In the past, much of the bird monitoring along the Colorado River involved floating surveys, in which observers recorded all observations of birds made while floating by riparian habitat. Data collected during float counts has been used to estimate relative and absolute abundance of breeding birds (Carothers and Sharber 1976), and to develop an index of population trends using selected indicator species (Brown and Johnson 1987). However, Verner (1985) has shown that different survey techniques have different inherent biases that can cause significant variability in survey accuracy and sensitivity, and which must be considered when interpreting survey results. Due to the very nature of floating surveys, possible biases (previously unquantified) include differences in detectibility of different bird species, interference from environmental noise (large habitat patches tend to be associated with noisy rapids in some reaches of the Canyon), and differences in detectibility based on the size and shape of the riparian habitat patches. These factors make the results of floating surveys difficult to interpret, at least without analysis of these factors and comparisons with other survey techniques.

The accuracy of floating versus walking total-counts was evaluated by Sogge et al. (1994). The overall species lists produced for the two techniques were very similar, but walking surveys generated much higher population estimates. Relatively rare species were poorly monitored by both techniques, illustrating that rare or widely dispersed species are best monitored with intensive, target-specific protocols (eg., Tibbitts et al. 1994). The emphasis of our 1995 efforts was to compare total-count walking surveys and point-count surveys, in order to evaluate the accuracy and sensitivity of the point-count technique with respect to long-term monitoring.

Methodology

Our study sites and total-count walking survey methods are described in Chapter 2. We conducted paired total-count surveys and point-count surveys at 11 sites from March through June, 1995. Point-counts were of 10- (March) or 5-minute (April-June) duration using a 50-meter detection radius to separate observations in and out of the survey area. We located from one to five point-count stations in each study site depending on size and configuration of the site. Point-count stations were systematically located, 150 meters apart along the length of each patch, half way between the river and upland vegetation. When comparing

results of the two techniques, all point-count data from a single site were combined. We compared the number of species detected and the number of individuals detected (for each of the most abundant species) by performing a linear regression of data from all surveys with comparative total-count and point-count data.

Progress to Date

Results in this report are restricted to preliminary analyses to our 1995 riparian breeding bird data. For point counts, greater than 80% of all species detections were made in the first 5 minutes of 10-minute point-counts. Therefore, all future point-counts were conducted for only 5 minutes. The probability of detecting a species on 5 minute point-counts (given that the species was known to occur at the site) was 0.73, varying from 0.96 to 0.12 for different species. Probability of detecting a species on a walking total-count survey was 0.88, ranging from 1.0 to 0.7 for different species. Different levels of survey effort could account for differences in detection probability between the two techniques. However, the average length of walking total-counts (45 ± 3.8 min) and point-counts (44 ± 4.1 min) were not significantly different (T-test: T=0.15, 77 df, P=0.88).

The variability in detecting different species is related to the interaction betwen the life history characteristics of the bird species and the details of a particular survey technique. The species most reliably detected were either the most common (Lucy's Warbler, Bell's Vireo, Bewick's Wren), loudest (Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell's Vireo, Bewick's Wren), or the most wide-ranging (Ash-throated Flycatcher, House Finch) species in the canyon. The species most commonly missed on point-counts (Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat) are concentrated primarily near the river's edge, relatively rare (the Common Yellowthroat), not as vocal, and maintain small territories. The interplay of these characteristics increases the probability that these two species will not be detected in a fixed-radius point count.

Overall abundance estimates for each species from point-counts and total-counts were highly correlated (R^2=0.98), with a regression line slope of 0.88. The closer the slope is to 1.0, the closer the two variables are to a one-to-one relationship. Thus, a slope of 0.88 represents a good correspondence between the two techniques.

Of the 22 riparian breeding species observed on walking and point-count surveys, ten were observed on less than 5% of all point-count surveys (Table 4-1). These species are too rare for effective population trend monitoring by general techniques such as walking or point-count surveys.

Table 4-1. Obligate riparian breeding birds in the Grand Canyon observed on <5% of all point-count surveys, 1995.

Brown-crested Flycatcher	Lazuli Bunting
Brown-headed Cowbird	Northern Mockingbird
Blue Grosbeak	Northern Oriole
Costa's Hummingbird	Phainopepla
Indigo Bunting	Summer Tanager

Chapter 5. Quantifying diet patterns of riparian breeding birds

Introduction

Riparian zones in the southwest are extremely important for resident and migratory birds. Over 60% of neotropical migratory birds use riparian habitat in the West for breeding or as stopover areas during migration (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Of 166 species of nesting birds in the southwest, 77% were dependent on water associated habitats and 51% were completely dependent upon riparian habitat (Johnson et al. 1977). The thick, multi-storied vegetation found in riparian areas provides more nest sites and greater food production (i.e. insects) for birds (Gori 1992) than do adjacent sites. Steven's et al. (1977) reported that western riparian areas contained up to 10 times the number of migrants per hectare as did adjacent non-riparian habitats. Knowing how important riparian areas are to birds, it is of growing concern that estimates have placed riparian habitat loss at greater than 95% in the western United States (Krueper 1992). Recent studies suggest that neotropical migrant songbird populations are declining and that these declines have accelerated in recent years. Lower numbers of songbirds may be due to declining habitat availability (Finch 1991).

A new riparian habitat was established along the Colorado River due to controlled releases of river flows after the completion of Glen Canyon Dam in 1963. This new riparian habitat (termed the new high water zone [NHWZ]) immediately parallel to the river is composed predominately of introduced tamarisk, native coyote willow, and several species of seepwillow. Before controlled flows, vegetation adjacent to the river was sparse due to annual flooding (Turner and Karpiscak 1980). The pre-dam vegetation (termed old high water zone [OHWZ]) that still exists is comprised of a band of vegetation characterized predominately by native honey mesquite and catclaw acacia. Breeding bird densities along the Colorado river corridor have increased in the last 20 years due to the increased amount of the new riparian habitat (Carothers and Johnson 1975, Brown and Johnson 1985, Carothers and Brown 1991).

Past studies on breeding bird communities along the Colorado River corridor in the Grand Canyon have concentrated on species present, nesting habits and the effects of fluctuating flows on densities of birds in the riparian areas (Carothers and Sharber 1976, Brown 1988, Brown and Johnson 1987). Very little is known about the diet of birds that use the riparian vegetation along the river. In fact, the diet of most neotropical migrant species is poorly known throughout their ranges (Karr 1976, Loiselle and Blake 1990). Diet studies are seldom undertaken due to difficulties in identifying fragmented arthropods found in diet samples, but such studies can quantify direct habitat use by avian insectivores (Sherry 1984, Rosenberg and Cooper 1990). Examination of avian diet is essential in gaining an understanding of bird species and how they use their habitat. Within the Grand Canyon, it is important to study avian diet in order to: (1) understand what arthropods are important as food resources to the birds within the riparian vegetation along the Colorado River and (2) link the ecology of these terrestrial bird species to aquatic resources (i.e. insects emerging from the river) that may be directly affected by river flow regimes and management.

Stevens (1976, 1985) inventoried arthropods found in the NHWZ and OHWZ riparian vegetation at selected sites along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. While information and results from this collection were invaluable in identification of arthropods collected in the present study, our's is the first effort to relate arthropod availability to actual composition of bird diets along the Colorado River.

Our primary goal was to quantify the arthropod composition of the diets of selected breeding birds along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, as related to the use of riparian vegetation and aquatic resource food base. In order to accomplish this, we designed the project to accomplish the following objectives:

> 1) determine the similarities and/or differences in diet between six common insectivores in the riparian area along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon, emphasizing proportions of the birds' diet composed of aquatic-origin (ie. emerging from the Colorado River) versus terrestrial-origin arthropods.
>
> 2) compare the diet of these bird species in the upper Grand Canyon (above the Little Colorado River at river mile 60.3) versus the lower Grand Canyon.
>
> (3) determine avian foraging location (NHWZ, OHWZ) by identification of stomach contents and relative prey abundance in each of the habitats.

This 1995 annual report will include results only for objective 1. The results for all objectives will be submitted in the final project report.

Methodology

We selected the following bird species for dietary analysis: Bewick's Wren, Lucy's Warbler, Bell's Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Ash-throated Flycatcher. Bewick's Wren appears to be a permanent resident, while the last five species are neotropical migrants. All six species are insectivores.

Four study sites were chosen along the Colorado River: Paria Creek (RM 1.0); Saddle Canyon (RM 47.0); Stairway Canyon (RM 171.0); Parashant Canyon (RM 198.0). Partway through 1994, Spring Canyon (RM 204) was substituted for the Stairway Canyon site due to low capture rate of birds at the latter. Stairway Canyon was sampled for birds March and April of 1994, then Spring Canyon was sampled in May, June and July.

Diet Samples

Diet samples were obtained from birds that were captured in mist nets two days per month at each study site from March through June of 1994 and in May of 1995. Diet samples were taken from birds caught between dawn and noon when high feeding rates usually guarantee full stomachs for sampling (Sherry 1984). Nets were placed in the same basic locations within each study sites during each month of the breeding season of 1994 to maintain consistency of sampling. The netting efforts were already underway as part of the overall avian community study (refer to Chapter 3).

Stomach contents from the birds were obtained by flushing the digestive tract with a fixed amount of warm water as described by Moody (1970). Lavage has a low mortality rate compared to using chemical emetics for forced regurgitation (Laursen 1978, Robinson and Holmes 1982, Gavett and Wakeley 1986). In past studies, the efficiency rate of the lavage technique was 52% $\pm$ 29 (Laursen 1978). The stomach content samples were labeled with the date, location of sample, and species of bird, then stored in vials with 70% alcohol and identified in the lab. In the event of rare accidental mortality, the entire stomach was removed and dissected after flushing, to determine what, if any, prey remained in the stomach after lavage.

Individual arthropods, usually fragmented, were pieced together until all identifiable prey fragments were accounted for. One item of prey was tallied for each head capsule, pair of mandibles, four wings (two for Diptera), or two elytra found in each diet sample (Anthony and Kunz 1977). Food items were identified to order and when possible, family. Aquatic or terrestrial origin of the arthropod was also specified. In order to make dietary comparisons between the six species of birds, orders of arthropods found in stomach samples were grouped into eight categories: Hemiptera (true bugs); Araneae (spiders); Coleoptera (beetles); Homoptera (leafhoppers); Hymenoptera (wasps, bees and ants); Diptera (flies); Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies - most often larvae) and Other (Thysanoptera, Neuroptera, Acari and unknown - two unknown larvae).

An analysis of variance (ANOVA; Sokal and Rohlf 1995) was used to test for a significant difference in the proportions of aquatic-origin versus terrestrial-origin arthropods in the diet of all six species of birds at all the sites. To date, data has been analyzed for all samples collected in 1994.

Several procedures in this study minimize the problem of different digestion rates of insect taxa: 1) diets limited to arthropods minimize the range of digestion times (compared with seeds, nectar and fruit); 2) collection of birds for diet sampling during peak feeding activity tends to standardize the stage of digestion among different stomachs (Sherry 1984).

Arthropod Samples

Arthropod sampling was conducted at each site one day per month from March through July during the same period that birds were captured to collect diet samples in mist nets. Three methods of sampling were employed to obtain a more representative collection of what prey items were available. In order to collect vegetation dwelling arthropods, we made 25 sweeps with a standard sweep net (37 cm in diameter) and 25 beats on the vegetation (collected onto a beating canvas). A Malaise trap was used to collect flying insects. All three sampling methods described above were used simultaneously in both the NHWZ and the OHWZ. Arthropods were stored in 70% alcohol for later identification in the lab. They were identified to order and family, then counted and grouped into the same eight categories of orders used for the dietary analysis. The origin (aquatic or terrestrial) of each arthropod was determined, and the proportions of each origin were calculated to give an estimate of the observable availability at all of our sampling sites along the Colorado River.

Progress to Date

Arthropods in bird diets

Diet samples (arthropod fragments) were successfully obtained from 202 (92%) of 220 birds lavaged in 1994 (Table 5-1). We were able to classify 98% of the arthropods identified in diet samples as aquatic or terrestrial in origin. Arthropods of unknown origin comprised 2% of the diet. Terrestrial-origin arthropods comprised 90% of the diet of all six bird species combined, while aquatic-origin arthropods accounted for only 8% (Figure 5-1).

Table 5-1. Number of bird species caught for diet analysis during the breeding season in 1994 at five sites along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park.

SITE	Lucy's Warbler	Bell's Vireo	Bewick's Wren	Yellow Warbler	Yellow-breasted Chat	Ash-throated Flycatcher	TOTAL
Paria Beach RM 1.0	4	0	11	0	3	4	22
Saddle Canyon RM 47.0	27	0	15	6	3	10	61
Stairway Canyon RM 172.0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Parashant RM 198.0	23	22	5	1	8	2	61
Spring Canyon RM 202.0	21	15	2	11	4	1	54
TOTAL	77	39	33	18	18	17	202

There was a significant difference in the proportions of aquatic-origin versus terrestrial-origin arthropods in the diets of the six species of birds (ANOVA: $F_{5, 201} = 3.871$, $P = 0.002$). Mean proportions of aquatic-origin arthropods varied (Figure 5-2), with Yellow Warbler consuming the highest (15.8% ± 5.7), and Yellow-breasted Chat the lowest (0.79% ± 0.79). Post hoc multiple analysis (Duncan's multiple range test) revealed that Yellow Warblers had a significantly higher proportion of aquatic-origin arthropods in their diet than did the other five species ($P < 0.05$). No other significant differences in proportion of aquatic-origin arthropods were found between bird species.

Arthropods in the habitat

The collections from the riparian habitat along the Colorado River were composed of 83% terrestrial-origin and 17% aquatic-origin arthropods (Figure 5-1). Arthropods of unknown origin comprised less than 1.0% of the samples.

Effectiveness of lavage technique

Only three birds out of 220 (1.4%) died of apparent stress due to lavage in 1994 and 1995. All three were Lucy's Warblers that were lavaged prior to their death. Arthropod fragments were lavaged from two of the birds, but no prey items were obtained from the third. The stomachs of all three warblers were removed and preserved immediately after mortality. No prey items remained in the preserved stomachs when they were examined in the lab. This is a good indication that lavage was effective in obtaining the actual stomach contents from birds.

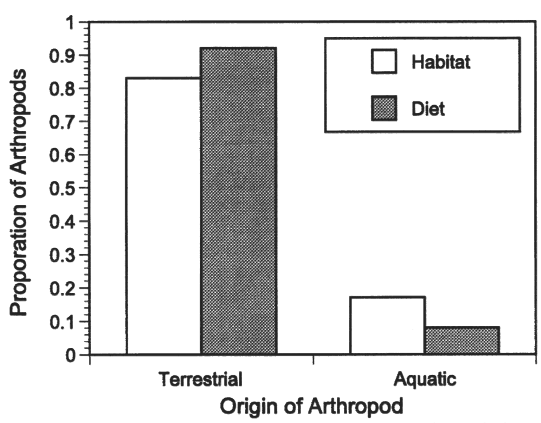

Figure 5-1. The proportion of aquatic-origin and terrestrial-origin arthropods recorded in the riparian habitat along the Colorado River, and in the diet of selected insectivorous birds in these same habitats.

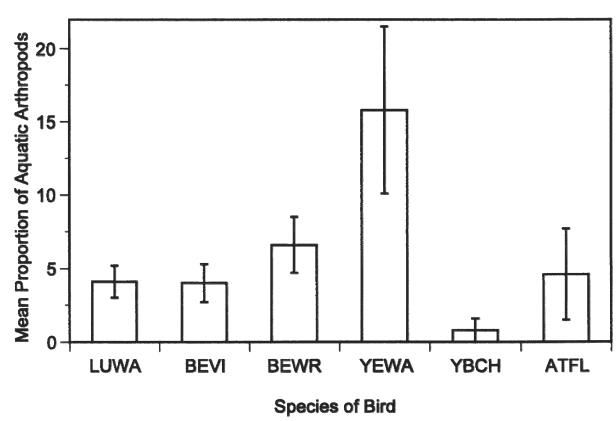

Figure 5-2. The mean proportions of aquatic-origin arthropods found in the diets of six riparian bird species along the Colorado River. Vertical lines represent ± one standard deviation.

Summary

Our data clearly show that terrestrial-origin arthropods are the primary food resource for the six species of birds we studied, comprising approximately 90% of their diet. Terrestrial-origin arthropods were also five times more abundant in the riparian habitat collections than were aquatic-origin arthropods. This low prevalence of aquatic-origin arthropods in both the habitat and the diet samples may occur because the cold temperatures of the Colorado River may limit the number of emerging arthropods (Shannon 1993).

The relatively low importance of aquatic-origin arthropods in the birds' diets suggests that the the river has only a minor role as a direct food source for the riparian breeding birds that we studied. Therefore, any effect of river flow management on these birds' diet is likely to be manifested indirectly, through changes in riparian vegetation that in turn may cause changes in the composition and abundance of terrestrial-origin arthropod prey.

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Appendix 1. List of bird species observed in riparian habitats during avian monitoring surveys in the Grand Canyon, 1993-95, and their status (B = breeding, M = migrant, W = wintering, R = year-round resident, V = visitor, may breed in uplands). Status from Brown et al. (1987).

Species	Status
Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striatus*)	V
Black-crowned Night-heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)	B,W
Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)	V
Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*)	M
Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)	W,M
Mallard (*Anas platyrynchos*)	B,M,W
Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)	M,W
American Wigeon (*Anas americana*)	M,W
Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)	M,W
Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)	M,W
Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*)	M,W
Sora (*Porzana carolina*)	M
American Coot (*Fulica americana*)	B,M,W
Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)	M
Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitus macularia*)	B,M
Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*)	M
Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)	M,V
Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)	M,W
Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)	M,V
Bald Eagle (*Haliaeeetus luecocephalus*)	M,W
American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)	B,R
Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)	M,V
Gambel's Quail (*Callipepla gambelii*)	V
Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)	B,R
Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)	B,M
White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*)	V
Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*)	B
Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*)	B,V
Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*)	M
Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)	M,W
Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*)	M,W
Ladder-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*)	R,V
Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)	M,B?
Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*)	M
Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*)	B
Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)	B,V
Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus borealis*)	M
Western Wood-pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*)	M
Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*)	B,M
Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)	B,R
Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*)	M
Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*)	B,M
Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*)	M
Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*)	B,V
Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)	M
Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)	M,W,V
American Crow (*Corvus brachyrynchos*)	V
Common Raven (*Corvus corax*)	B,V
Mountain Chickadee (*Parus gambeli*)	W
Bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*)	W
Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*)	B,R
Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*)M	
Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*)	R,V
Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*)	R,V
House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)	M
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)	W
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*)	B,M,V
Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*)	W
Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*)	M
Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*)	W
American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)	M
Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)	M,V
Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottus*)	B
Crissal Thrasher (*Toxostoma crissale*)	B?
American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*)	M
Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)	M,W
Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*)	B,M
Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*)	B
Gray Vireo (*Vireo vicinior*)	M
Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*)	M
Lucy's Warbler (*Vermivora luciae*)	B
Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*)	M,W
Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*)	B,M
MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*)	M
Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*)	M
Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*)	B,M
Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*)	B,M
Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)	M
Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*)	B
Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)	B,M
Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*)	B,M
Green-tailed Towhee (*Piplio chlorurus*)	M
Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*)	M
Brown Towhee (*Piplio fuscus*)	W,B?
Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)	W,M,B?
Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)	M
Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*)	V
Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*)	B,V
Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*)	W,M
Black-chinned Sparrow (*Spizella atrogularis*)	M,V
Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)	W,M
White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)	W
Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*)	M
Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)	B
Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)	B,M
Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)	M,W
Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*)	V
Northern Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)	B,M
Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*)	B,M
Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)	M
Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)	B
American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristas*)	M
Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*)	B,V
House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)	B,V
House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)	M?

Appendix 2. Location of avian community monitoring study sites in Grand Canyon National Park, 1993-95. Direct impact study sites are named in brackets.

Site #	Location (river miles below Lees Ferry)	
10	0.0 R	[Lee's Ferry]
20	1.0 R	[Paria]
30	1.6 R	
32	2.0 L	
34	3.7 L	
40	5.1 L	
50	5.2 R	
60	5.6 R	
67	46.0 L	
70	46.7 R	[Saddle]
80	47.5 L	
90	48.5 L	
100	49.1 R	
110	49.2 L	
120	50.0 R	
130	73.9 R	
140	74.1 R	
150	74.3 R	
160	74.4 R	
165	74.4 L	
170	75.9 R	
180	76.0 L	
185	76.5 L	
182	95.7 L	
183	95.9 L	
185	97.4 R	
186	97.4 L	
187	97.5 L	
188	97.6 L	
190	110.0 R	
200	112.0 R	
210	117.5 R	
220	119.5 R	
230	119.6 L	
232	122.8 L	
234	125.5 R	
236	131.3 R	
240	167.0 R	
250	167.2 L	
260	167.6 R	
270	168.5 L	
280	168.8 R	
290	171.0 R	[Stairway]
291	171.1 R	
300	172.2 L	
310	173.1 R	
318	174.2 L	
320	174.4 R	
330	174.5 R	
340	174.7 R	
342	197.3 L	
345	197.6 L	
350	198.0 R	[Parashant]
352	198.2 L	
355	198.3 R	
360	199.5 R	
370	200.0 L	
380	200.4 R	
382	200.5 R	
390	202.5 R	
398	204.1 R	
400	204.5 R	[Spring]
410	205.8 R	
420	206.5 L	
422	206.6 R	
430	208.7 R	
440	213.7 L	
450	214.0 L	
455	214.2 L	
460	224.0 L	
470	224.1 R	

Appendix 3. Species and number of individuals banded at the four direct impact study sites along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park during 1995.

Species	Paria	Saddle	Parashant	Spring	Total
Mourning Dove	3				3
Ash-thoated Flycatcher	3	1		2	6
Western Wood Pewee				1	1
Gray Flycatcher		1	1	1	3
Dusky Flycatcher	1	1		1	3
Willow Flycatcher			1	1	2
Bushtit	28				28
House Wren	1				1
Bewick's Wren	3	7	6	2	18
Marsh Wren	7		1	3	11
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	12	1	4	3	20
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3	1	6	4	14
Hermit Thrush			1		1
Northern Mockingbird			1	1	2
Bell's Vireo			18	21	39
Gray Vireo	1				1
Solitary Vireo				1	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	2			1	3
Virginia's Warbler	2	1			3
Lucy's Warbler	1	10	45	58	114
Yellow-rumped Warbler			1	1	2
Yellow Warbler	5	2	12	36	55
MacGillivrays' Warbler	2		2	1	5
Wilson's Warbler	3	2	2	3	10
Northern Waterthrush	1				1
Common Yellowthroat	7		3	2	12
Yellow-breasted Chat	2		4	9	15
Black-headed Grosbeak	1				1
Blue Grosbeak	1				1
Indigo Bunting				2	2
Lazuli Bunting	2				2
Green-tailed Towhee	2				2
Song Sparrow	3		2	3	8
Black-throated Sparrow			1		1
Rufous-crowned Sparrow			1		1
Chipping Sparrow	1				1
Dark-eyed Junco	19	2	4		25
White-crowned Sparrow	22				22
Lincoln's Sparrow	6		2	1	9
Red-winged Blackbird			1		1
Northern Oriole	1			1	2
Western Tanager				5	5
Phainopepla				1	1
Lesser Goldfinch			2	1	3
House Finch		2			2
Total	145	31	121	166	463
Species Total	29	12	23	27	45