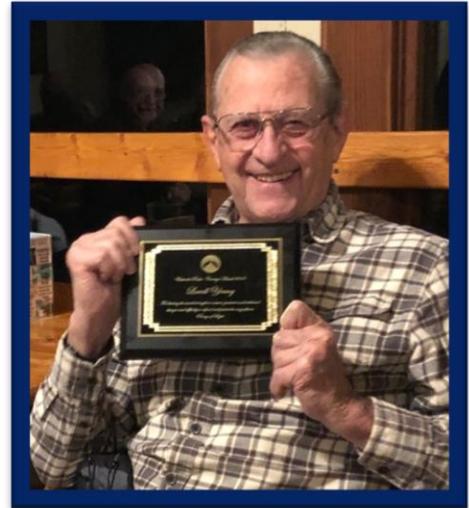


AUDUBON DESIGNATES LOWELL YOUNG SOUTHERN SIERRA NEVADA IMPORTANT BIRD AREA



Audubon has designated the Southern Sierra Nevada as an Important Bird Area and has named it after Lowell Young, a long-time conservationist who has dedicated his life to protecting birds in the Sierra Nevada and the Central Valley. Lowell is an expert birder, advocate, and active member of the California Democratic Party. He has been the President of Yosemite Area Audubon, and the winner of the Charles H. Callison Award for volunteerism, Audubon's highest national honor. He has pursued environmental and social justice all his life, working on the Audubon's campaign to save the tricolored blackbird and California's anti-smoking initiatives, ensuring that we have clean air in our immediate vicinity in California. He has also been an active member of Unite the Parks, helping with the effort to create the Range of Light National Monument out of the federal land near Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks.



The new IBA is home to several endangered and threatened bird species, including the great gray owl, the willow flycatcher, the black-backed woodpecker, the northern goshawk, and the spotted owl. In addition, more than 168 bird species breed or occur regularly during summer in the southern Sierra Nevada, and more than 300 bird species are known to occur within the region, seasonally, during northbound or southbound migration.

The Southern Sierra Nevada has recently experienced severe changes to its habitat, which threaten all wildlife dependent upon the forest ecosystem. From 2014 to 2016, a severe drought caused extensive tree loss, such that millions of trees were lost, and in 2020, two major fires burned through the southern Sierra Nevada, affecting more than half a million acres. While fires can have a beneficial affect on habitat, particularly for the black-backed woodpecker, that habitat can be harmed by post-fire logging, without proper protections.

By designating this area as an Important Bird Area, Audubon establishes its commitment to helping preserve the area for birds and wildlife, and by naming it after Lowell Young, the organization honors one of its most dedicated volunteers and naturalists.

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ENDANGERED BIRD SPECIES IN THE SIERRA NEVADA



THE GREAT GRAY OWL: Yosemite is the last sanctuary of almost all of California's great gray owls. Researchers estimate there are only about 200 to 300 individuals in California, and about 65% of the state's population resides in Yosemite. Great gray owls nest in the middle elevations of the park where forests and meadows meet. The owls stand as tall as 2 feet with a 5-foot wingspan and has distinctive piercing yellow eyes accented by large facial disks. Great gray owls,

restricted to montane meadows, are threatened from mounting resource use. Threats outside the park include timber harvest, grazing, and development pressures. Nearly intact ecosystems are critically important to support species and to study changes in species.

WILLOW FLYCATCHER: Once considered common throughout much of the Sierra Nevada, the Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax trailii*) has declined precipitously since the middle of the 20th century. By the late 1990s, the region's population was estimated at just 300-400 individuals. Willow Flycatchers appear to have stopped breeding at many historically occupied meadows. Recent studies suggest one explanation of the decline is poor nesting success, largely due to meadow desiccation, which allows mammalian predators easier access to Willow Flycatcher nests. Causes of meadow desiccation throughout the Sierra Nevada include streambank erosion due to livestock grazing and roads, water diversions, climate change, and other factors.



BLACK-BACKED

WOODPECKERS: The black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*) is non-migratory avian fire-specialist favoring northern coniferous forests of North America (Hutto and Woolf 2009). Its diet consists mainly of insects such as woodboring beetles and bark beetles, which colonize readily in early post-fire habitats (Dudley 2005). Black-backed woodpeckers rely upon sound, hard, large diameter snags – which are largely limited in intensely managed forests - for nesting habitat. Their populations are dangerously small, with local populations not at a size likely to be sustainable.



Commercial logging and post-fire salvage logging continue to threaten this bird population.