

### PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

#### **Belding's Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis beldingi*



Belding's Yellowthroat (© Javier Lascurain/www.rarebirdseyearbook.com).



#### **Background**

Belding's Yellowthroat has a fragmented distribution along the coast of Baja California, Mexico. While it is not uncommon at some sites, the total area of suitable habitat is thought to be very small, and hence the total population is probably between 1,000 and 2,500 individuals. It occupies patches of reeds, cattails and tule, fringing permanent, lowland marshes or rivers, and never occurs more than 50 m from the water's edge.

Owing to its specialised habitat requirements it is highly susceptible to drainage and disturbance of wetlands, including by accidental and deliberate fires, reed-cutting for tourism facilities and house construction, and drainage for agriculture and cattle-ranching.

#### **Actions being implemented**

1. A **Conservation Area Plan** is being developed identifying key threats and outlining a conservation strategy. Belding's Yellowthroat will form a key part of this plan, with its population to be monitored to provide an indicator of environmental health.
2. Staff have begun **research and monitoring** of Belding's Yellowthroat's population status, ecology and threats. Fire has been identified as a major threat to the species, with locals sometimes leaving their cooking fires unattended: these can spread across the local vegetation.
3. The project has **raised local awareness** through community projects and events. A voluntary clean-up day at the reserve was especially successful.

4. The project has **trained local bird guides**, 15 of which have now been selected to take part in an advanced avitourism course. A local bird festival has also proved successful, with 70 people attending events including talks, children's games and a workshop on bird identification.
5. A baseline population estimate and other important information will be used in the preparation of a **Species Action Plan**.



Left: a Pronatura staff member carrying out monitoring of Belding's Yellowthroat at San Pedrito. Such monitoring will help track population trends and identify new threats should they arise. Right: Pronatura staff and volunteers.

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