

CAVITY NESTERS



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The **gilded flicker** is a large woodpecker, measuring 28-31 cm in length and weighing 111 g. The breast and abdomen are beige, spotted heavily with black. The back is pale brown with black horizontal stripes. The crown is a rufous yellow color, contrasting with the gray throat and ear covert. The ventral side of the tail and wings are yellow. In flight, the white rump is obvious. The male has a red malar stripe, which is lacking in the female. The gilded flicker has the pale brown head of a red-shafted flicker but the yellow wings and tail of the yellow-shafted flicker. In most of its breeding range, the gilded flicker is associated with mature saguaro cactus. Along the LCR, gilded flickers are associated with cottonwood-willow riparian areas and breed mostly where saguaros and Joshua trees exist. Typically, gilded flickers stay away from densely populated urban and rural neighborhoods. Primarily, flickers forage for food on the ground, in soil, and in anthills, probing and hammering their bill. Flickers are rarely found foraging in trees. Black ants and ant larvae have been identified in gilded flicker gullets and they have been observed eating cactus fruits and ants. It is suggested that gilded flicker diet is similar to northern flickers, whose diet is reported as consisting mostly of ants and ground beetles. In the fall and winter flicker diets have been found to shift to fruits.

- *LCR Populations: Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)*

The **Gila woodpecker** is a noisy, aggressive, and conspicuous medium-sized woodpecker. Adults weigh 51-79 grams and measure 24 cm from head to tail. Adults have a light grayish-brown head, neck, and underparts. The bill is dull black. The abdomen is golden yellow and the legs are a dark greenish-brown. The back and tail are narrowly barred black and white. In flight, a white patch on the wings is obvious. At close distance, the male has a conspicuous red patch on the top of the head. Females and juveniles resemble the male; however, they lack the red patch on the head. Dimorphic in size, the male is 14% heavier, with a 14% longer bill. Found in the arid deserts of the southwestern United States and northeastern Mexico, the Gila woodpecker utilizes saguaro cacti and riparian woodlands. Within the LCR MSCP area, the Gila woodpecker is found along the river and washes in cottonwood-willow habitat. Gila woodpeckers forage primarily on the trunk and inner branches of trees, probing for insects. The main food sources for the Gila woodpecker are insects such as ants, beetles, grasshoppers, cicadas, and moths and butterflies. The fruits of the saguaros, and berries from mistletoe and lyceum are consumed as well. They have also been noted storing oak acorns. In cottonwood trees, Gila woodpeckers eat galls (egg sacs) from aphids laid on the petioles of the leaves.

- *LCR Populations: Havasu NWR, Bill Williams River NWR, and Imperial NWR*



Amy Leist



Elf owls are the smallest owl in the world, with adults measuring 12.4-14.2 cm in length and weighing 35-55 g. Its back is grayish brown with buff mottling; the belly is grayish white with cinnamon vertical streaks. A prominent white eyebrow stripe encircles cinnamon facial disks, there are no ear tufts, and the iris is yellow. The wings have two white scapular stripes. Elf owls have a short tail with buffy bands. The sexes are alike in plumage, with the female unnoticeably larger. The plumages remain the same throughout the year. Elf owls are nocturnal with higher rates of activity from sunset plus 4 hours and from 4 hours until sunrise. In most of its breeding range, the elf owl is associated with mature saguaro cactus. Along the LCR, elf owls are associated with mesquite woodlands and cottonwood-willow riparian areas. In the non-breeding season, elf owls utilize tropical deciduous forests with columnar cacti and arid grassy savanna with columnar cacti. Elf owls capture their prey in flight, on the ground, on foliage, on flowers, around outdoor lights, and at hummingbird feeders. Elf owls capture their prey with their beak or feet via a sit and wait strategy from perches. The major food items are arthropods, consisting principally of insects, including moths, beetles, and crickets, and a few reports of elf owls eating snakes, lizards and mice. In the nesting season, adults often cache prey for later consumption by nestlings.

- *LCR Populations: Blankenship Bend (Lake Havasu City, AZ) and Bill Williams River NWR*