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Nesting ecology of Yellow Warblers (*Dendroica petechia*) in montane chaparral in the northern Sierra Nevada

The Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) is considered a riparian specialist in much of western North America, but in California it also breeds in a second habitat type: montane chaparral of the Sierra Nevada and southern Cascades.

We monitored Yellow Warbler nests in montane chaparral and assessed their poorly known nesting ecology in this habitat. We also conducted point counts in upland habitat throughout the region.

We determined habitat associations for Yellow Warblers based on nest site and point-count vegetation data; nests were predominantly in bush chinquapin (*Chrysolepis sempervirens*) and greenleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos patula*), and point-count abundance was most strongly associated with high overall shrub cover.

The importance of montane chaparral for a number of shrub-dependent Sierran birds is well documented, yet the chaparral is threatened by various practices including fire suppression, closed-canopy-focused forest management, and understory fuels-reduction treatments. Although Yellow Warblers are far more abundant in wet mountain meadow riparian habitat in the region, we recommend that management of montane chaparral habitat consider this species and the requirements of other shrub-nesting birds.

Management Implications:

- Yellow Warblers are not obligate riparian breeders in California - they also breed in montane chaparral.
- Montane chaparral is an under-appreciated habitat type in the Sierra Nevada, is threatened by various practices, and may be declining.
- For Yellow Warblers in this habitat, manage for shrub cover over 70%.
- Also manage for taller shrubs with broad leaves (Manzanita, Bush Chinquapin, *Prunus* spp.)

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