



## Abert's Towhee

*Pipilo aberti*

**The Abert's towhee is a large sparrow with gray-brown upper parts and pinkish-brown underparts. The face is dark brown with a light bill. Unlike many birds, the plumage between the sexes is identical.**

**Habitat:** The Abert's towhee is found in mesquite bosques and cottonwood-willow associations with an understory of dense shrubs.

**Range:** The Abert's towhee occurs in brushy riparian habitat within the Lower Sonora zone. It occurs in southeastern California, southern Nevada, southwestern Utah, central Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and northern Sonora. In Arizona, the towhee can be found in suitable habitat along rivers, streams, and washes.

**Diet:** Abert's towhee feeds on insects and seeds.

**Reproduction:** Abert's towhees are monogamous and usually mate for life. The mated pair has a year-round territory which serves as its foraging ground and nesting area. Abert's towhees have two broods per year, usually during the spring and late summer. The female lays two to five eggs which are pale blue with dark brown markings. A new brood is started about nine weeks after the first nest is started.

**Status:** The Abert's towhee has experienced a population decline over the last 150 years, most likely due to habitat loss. Many riparian areas, preferred habitat for the towhee, have been cleared or altered by human use. Lowered water tables have dried streams and reduced the dense vegetation. Salt cedar, an invasive exotic species, provides less than optimal habitat and now covers much of the towhees' range. The Abert's towhee is experiencing much of the same habitat loss as the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and would benefit from habitat protection for the endangered species.<sup>1</sup>

**Abert's Towhee in Pima County:** At one time, many of the riparian habitats of Pima County were home to the Abert's towhee. The destruction of these habitats has caused a decline in the populations of the towhee. Protection and restoration of the remaining riparian habitats are important for the towhee, as well as many other species of animals.

### References

*I. Tweit, R.C., and D.M. Finch. 1996. Abert's Towhee (Pipilo alberti). The Birds of North America, No. 111 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.*

---

[back to Priority Vulnerable Species Fact Sheets](#)