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**PREDICTING AVIAN POPULATION RESPONSES TO FUEL REMOVAL IN RIVER
WOODLANDS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES**

As part of a study to determine effects of removing fire fuels on riparian bird species, over 400 nests of 10 species were found and monitored during the pre-treatment period, 2000-2002. In this presentation, we report on the relationships between species-specific relative abundance, nesting success, and habitat measures such as stem density, canopy cover, and fuel loads of exotic and native trees. Two woody alien plant species, salt cedar (*Tamarix ramossima*) and Russian olive (*Oleagnus angustifolia*), are classified as hazardous fire fuels by land managers on the Rio Grande, and are in the process of being removed on 12 river sites in 2003 to reduce risk of bosque wild fires. Pre-treatment point count data collected at all study sites revealed that numbers of shrub-nesting species such as Broad-tailed Hummingbird and Blue Grosbeak increased with increasing stem densities of exotics. Relative abundance of hole-nesters including Bewick's Wren and Ash-throated Flycatcher increased with increasing quantities of dead and down logs. We predict that removing exotic plants and dead and downed wood to reduce fire risk will reduce habitat availability, particularly availability of nest substrates, thereby influencing population distributions of shrub-nesters, cavity-nesters, and dead-wood foragers at local sites on the Rio Grande.