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**50 CFR Part 17**
**Bell's Vireo; Notice of Review**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Review of the Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*).

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that the Service has accepted a petition to consider listing the California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and northwestern Mexico populations of the Bell's Vireo as either Endangered or Threatened. Further data on the present status, possible Critical Habitats, and impacts of such a designation are still required before the Service can propose listing this species in accordance with section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

**DATES:** Information regarding the status, habitat, and impacts of such rules should be submitted on or before October 3, 1980.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments on this notice of status review should be addressed to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. John L. Spinks, Jr., Chief, Office of Endangered Species, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, 703/235-2771.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On November 8, 1979, the Service received a petition to list two subspecies of the Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) from Mr. J. M. Greaves, Goleta, California. A review of the status of these two subspecies has been conducted and is summarized below. *Vireo bellii pusillus* had a breeding distribution from the Central Valley of California east through the Owen's Valley to Death Valley and

southern California (Santa Barbara County east to south-central San Bernardino County) to northwestern Baja California; wintering records are presently known only from southern Baja California, Mexico. *Vireo bellii arizonae* had a breeding distribution from southern Nevada and southwestern Utah, southward to southeastern California (Colorado River Valley), central Arizona, and southern Sonora, Mexico. So far as is known, this second subspecies winters in the tropical zone of Mexico from central Sonora and Baja California south to Colima. An estimate of the current (1978) California population by the petitioner for the subspecies *pusillus* is 100 pairs located in isolated pockets in southern California. Numerous searches throughout the former range of the California subspecies have not found them where they occurred prior to about 1950. Singing males are usually very conspicuous and are easily found in areas which still have a remnant population.

The decline of the vireo was attributed to the loss of the special habitat required and reproductive losses from the parasitism of the brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). Bell's Vireo nests in the early successional stages (principally willows) of riparian woodlands which are rapidly being lost. The cowbird has shown an increase in population in the American Southwest and has apparently only recently invaded the riparian habitat occupied by the vireo. The conclusion of the Service based upon this status review indicates that one or both of these subspecies may be candidates for a proposal as Endangered or Threatened under the protection of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

The data presented by Mr. Greaves were substantial to make the petition acceptable to the Service under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. However, insufficient data were presented to permit the Director to propose listing either subspecies as Endangered or Threatened or to propose any Critical Habitat. Some, but not all, of the information still required by the Service before the Director can consider proposing any rules are: complete distribution and numbers still extant in southwestern U.S. and northwestern Mexico, specific habitats that may be proposed as critical, economic and other impacts of designating such areas as Critical Habitats, and the documented impacts of the cowbird and loss of habitat to the vireo. Any person having information on the vireo's past or present distribution or rate of cowbird

parasitism are urged to send their records to the Service. Any other information relevant to this review would also be welcomed. The purpose of the extended comment period is to allow for at least the 1980 nesting data to be gathered and submitted.

The primary author of this notice of review is Jay M. Sheppard, Office of Endangered Species (703/235-1975).

Dated: January 31, 1980.

Lynn A. Greenwalt,

Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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