

ABSTRACT

IF YOU BUILD IT, WILL THEY COME? LANDBIRD RESPONSE TO RIPARIAN RESTORATION AT THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, CALIFORNIA

Biodiversity loss resulting from human landscape alteration is often sought to be reversed through ecological restoration. Most restoration projects focus on restoring habitat by reintroducing a subset of the native flora, assuming the remaining species from the native community return on their own. Here I present an empirical study that examines bird responses to riparian restoration. Point counts and vegetation assessments were employed to investigate forest development and bird habitat relationships. Recently restored forests can be characterized as early successional riparian habitat, with canopy cover ranging from open to semi-open, woody species primarily functioning as shrubs, and the presence of a well developed herbaceous layer. Ground granivores and canopy nesters were the most abundant and diverse functional groups detected in restored forests, and were attracted to vegetation that provides forage and cover. Revegetation has been successful in providing habitat for landbirds, but long-term restoration success requires reestablishment of hydrologic conditions that sustain ecosystem function and structure

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