

Washington State Species and Communities of Special Concern

information for family forest owners

As a good land steward, it is important to be aware of plant and animal species of special concern that may occur on your lands, and how forest management activities may affect these species. The Washington State Implementation Committee (WA SIC) for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is pleased to provide a series of factsheets on species of special concern that may occur on forested lands within Washington State. Each species factsheet includes a description of the species, habitat, range, and information on known threats to populations in Washington.



Photo of Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*)
By J&K Hollingsworth/ US Fish and Wildlife Service

Species: Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*)

Group: Bird

Natural Heritage Rank: G3, S1

Legal Status: Federally Threatened, State Endangered

General Description

This species is a medium-sized forest-dwelling owl. Adults are 18 inches in length and have a wingspan of 40 inches. Spotted owls have a stocky body, short tail, and broad wings. Adults are brown with white spots across on the abdomen and have dark brown eyes. These owls nest in large cavities, hollows, and mistletoe balls in older conifer trees in the spring, and young fledge by the end of the summer. Spotted owls have a four-note territorial call ("hooo-hoo-hoo-hoooo"). Their diet is primarily rodents, especially Northern flying squirrels, woodrats, and other squirrels and mice. Spotted owls can be confused with barred owls (*Strix varia*) which are larger, have white streaks on the abdomen, and have a five-note call.

Habitat

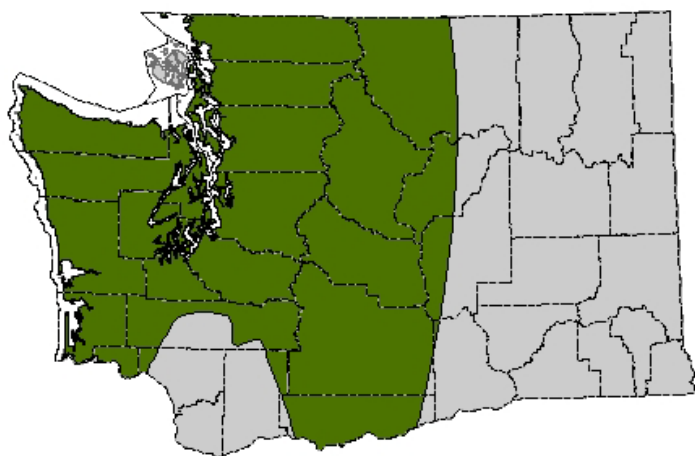
This species lives in older, multi-aged coniferous forests, generally characterized by multiple layers of trees, trees with structures such as cavities, hollows, broken tops, and other types of damage, and large amounts of snags and logs. Intensively managed forest stands generally do not have the structures to meet the nesting requirements of these owls or their prey, especially in western Washington.

Range in Washington

Spotted owls occur in older forests in western Washington and along the eastside of the Cascade crest in forests with a mix of Douglas-fir and pine.

Threats

Historically, the primary threat to this species has been conversion of older, multi-layered forests to intensively managed stands. More recent threats include competition with barred owls, habitat change from fire suppression, habitat loss from fires, and possibly disease.



Map source is NatureServe with following reference:
Data provided by NatureServe in collaboration with Robert Ridgely, James Zook, The Nature Conservancy - Migratory Bird Program, Conservation International - CABS, World Wildlife Fund - US, and Environment Canada - WILDSpace. Downloaded September 5, 2006

The information provided in this sheet has been compiled by the Washington SFI Implementation Committee. This species is one example of many that depend on family forest owners in Washington State for protection. To view other accounts, visit www.wdfw.wa.org or www.dnr.wa.gov/nhp, or www.natureserve.org.

