

USACE Natural Resource Management

Non-Migratory Birds



Northern Spotted Owl

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: The Northern Spotted Owl is one of three subspecies of the Spotted Owl. This subspecies is found from Northern California to British Columbia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Northern Spotted Owl as threatened in 1990.

USFWS notes that this owl has experienced widespread habitat loss across its range due to timber harvest, natural disturbances (i.e. fire), and land conversion. Habitat loss is still a threat despite a reduction in timber harvest on federal lands over the past two decades. Many segments of the Northern Spotted Owl's populations are still declining despite efforts to maintain and restore habitat. Competition from the Barred Owl has had negative impacts on this species.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: In 1992 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service drafted a recovery plan for the Northern Spotted Owl. This plan was then revised in 2008 and 2011. The USFWS also designated critical habitat for this owl in 2008 which was later revised in 2011.

In 1994, the Northwest Forest Plan was developed by the U.S. Forest Service in order to end the impasse over managing federal forests within the range of the Northern Spotted Owl. The plan utilized an innovative approach to watershed and ecosystem management by working beyond traditional administrative boundaries to manage resources.

HABITAT NEEDS: Though they are known to utilize a wide array of forest habitat types, mature forests with variety are preferred as these forests have the characteristics and structure needed for nesting, roosting, and foraging. *(All About Birds, Cornell)*

- Occupied forests contain dense canopy closure, abundant logs, standing snags, and live trees with broken tops
- Roost sites generally have dense vegetation. Roosting habitat includes large-diameter trees with high canopy closure and multiple canopy layers
 - During the summer, the Northern Spotted Owl can be found in cool, shady locations with nearby streams *(Birds of the World, Cornell)*

Size: This species grows to around 18 inches in length and weighs 17-24 ounces. *(All About Birds, Cornell)*

Color: The Northern Spotted Owl is predominantly dark brown with a barred tail and white spots on the head and breast. This bird has dark brown eyes surrounded by prominent facial disks. This subspecies is the darkest brown and has the smallest white spots of the three subspecies. *(USFWS)*

Photo Credit:
USFWS Pacific Region

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