

USACE Natural Resource Management

Non-migratory Birds



Mexican Spotted Owl

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: The Mexican Spotted Owl is one of three subspecies of the spotted owl. It ranges from Utah and Colorado south to southern Mexico. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed this subspecies as threatened in 1993.

According to the USFWS the primary reasons for this subspecies originally being listed were the historical alteration of its habitat as a result of timber-management and the threat posed by these practices continuing as evidenced in national forest plans. However since the Mexican Spotted Owl was originally listed in 1993, the primary threat has shifted from timber management to the increased risk of stand replacing wildfire. Climate variability may have a synergistic effect on increased loss of habitat due to fire. Furthermore, natural drought cycles have intensified in recent years, creating the potential for larger and more severe wildfires.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: The USFWS developed a recovery plan for the Mexican Spotted Owl in 1995. In 2004, critical habitat was designated which included 8.6 million acres of federal lands in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. Widespread critical habitat is needed because this owl has a disjunct and fragmented distribution necessitating landscape scale conservation.

HABITAT NEEDS: This owl is typically found in pine-oak forest or mixed-conifer forest that is dominated by Douglas-fir, pine, or true fir. The Mexican Spotted Owl is also known to inhabit narrow, steep canyons with a perennial water source (Birds of the World, Cornell).

- Strong selection documented for old-growth and/or complex structure forests.
- Understory often includes conifer species, but can also include Gambel oak, boxelder, New Mexico Locust and/or maple.
- Canyon habitats typically contain riparian forest, conifer forest, or clumps of trees; however, canyons may be sparsely vegetated.

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

Color: This owl is mostly dark brown with a barred tail and white spots on the head and breast. It has dark brown eyes surrounded by prominent facial disks. This subspecies is the smallest and the lightest in color of the three subspecies. It also has the largest white spots. (USFWS)

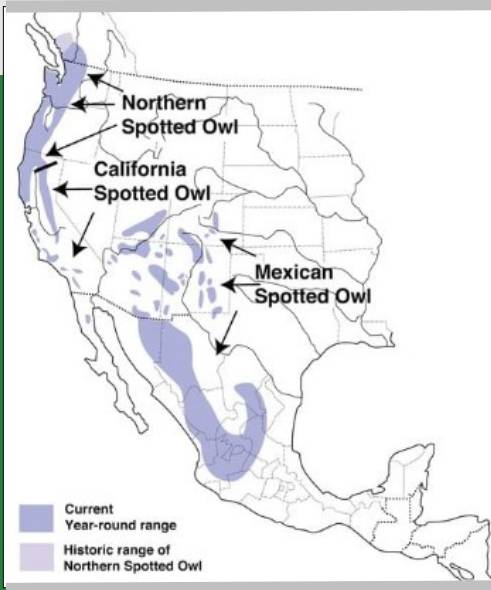
*Photo credit:
Left: BLM
Center & Right: USFWS*

*Natural Resource
Management (NRM)*

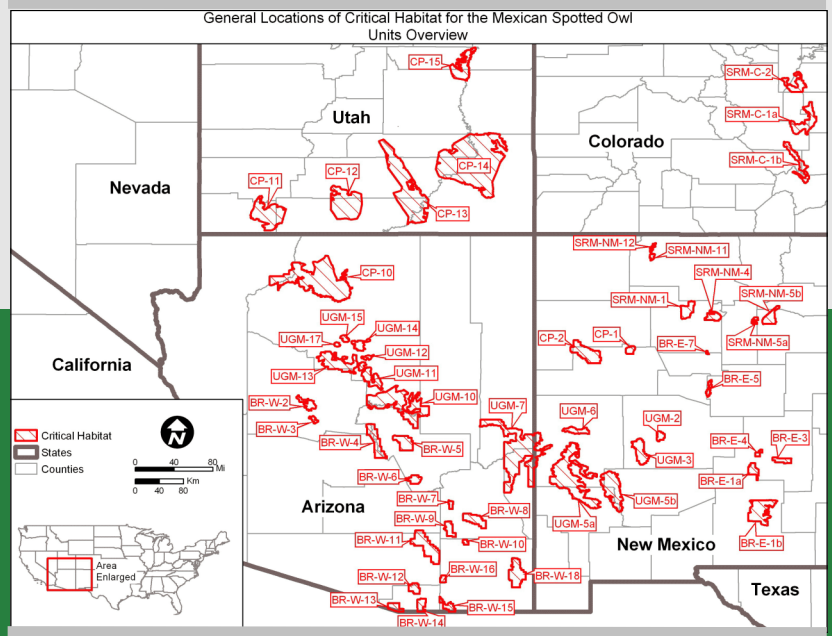
This fact sheet has been prepared as an unofficial publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This online publication is produced to provide its readers information about best management practices related to special status species. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Mention of specific vendors does not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Army or any element thereof.



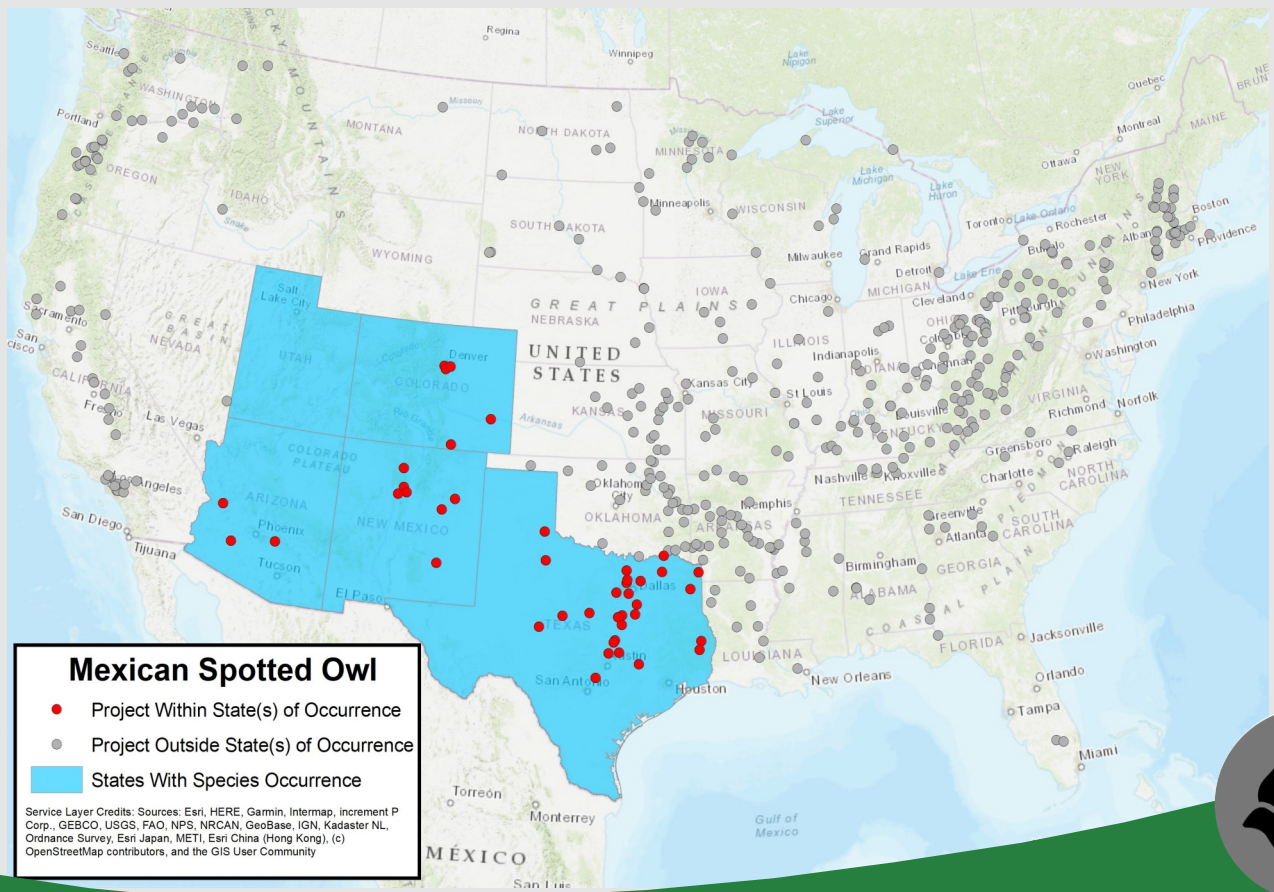
USACE ROLE: According the Engineering and Research Development Center's Threatened & Endangered Species Team (ERDC TEST), the USACE has spent \$174,365 on efforts related to the Mexican Spotted Owl since 2005. Of that sum, \$17,000 was expended to fund inventory, survey, and monitoring efforts for this owl. \$1,700 was spent on habitat protection which consisted of disturbance prevention via signage and fencing.



Photo, Left: Map of the Spotted Owl's subspecies' ranges provided by Cornell's Birds of the world.
 Photo, Right: Map of Mexican Spotted Owl critical habitat provided by USFWS.



WHAT IS USACE DOING: USACE operates a number of projects within the range of the Mexican Spotted Owl. USACE lands provide the opportunity to improve habitat conditions for the Mexican Spotted Owl and other listed species via the protection, restoration, and/or construction of habitat.



Non-migratory Birds

