



# Lewis's Woodpecker

*(Melanerpes lewis)*

## STATUS

SARA

NO STATUS

Alberta

SENSITIVE

British Columbia

BLUE

Saskatchewan

ABSENT

## PRIMARY HABITAT

Burned/open Douglas fir/Ponderosa pine

## TERRITORY SIZE

1–6 ha

## NEST TYPE

Cavity (snag)

## NEST REUSE

Common

## STAND LEVEL

Severely-burned patches  $\geq 1$  ha containing large-diameter snags.

## LANDSCAPE LEVEL

Prescribed burns and/or maintenance of open forests containing nest trees.

The northern edge of the Lewis's Woodpecker's range extends into southern interior BC and, to a very small extent, western Alberta.

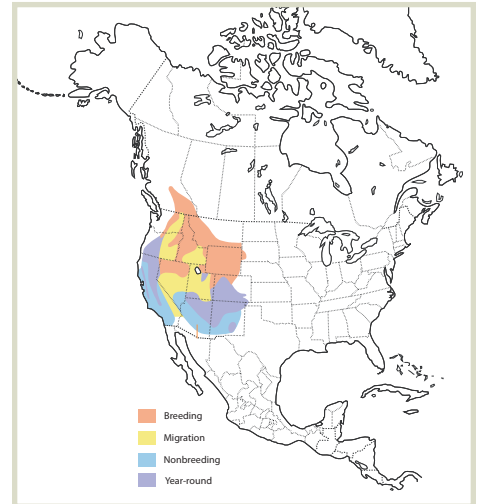
## BREEDING WINDOW



## HABITAT ECOLOGY

- The Lewis's Woodpecker, unlike most other woodpeckers, catches insects mid-air during the spring and summer. Thus, this species needs open habitats with dense ground cover over which to hunt.<sup>1</sup>
- This species is mainly found in open ponderosa pine, open riparian cottonwood, and logged or burned pine forests.<sup>1</sup>
  - Their habitat requirements include <30% crown closure and scattered/clumped large-diameter nesting trees.<sup>2</sup>
  - Riparian black cottonwood stands near open areas for foraging are important habitat in the Okanagan and Thompson regions,<sup>2</sup> but these may experience high predation if near intense agricultural development/grazing.<sup>3</sup>
- Burned forests may represent the highest-value habitats for this species, particularly crown-burned ponderosa pine stands and/or 2- to 25-year-old burns.<sup>4</sup>
- This weak cavity nester will either reuse cavities or excavate new nests in heavily-decayed, large-diameter snags (especially broken-topped snags and Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, or cottonwood).<sup>2,5</sup>

## RANGE MAP



## RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- This species' foraging habitat quality is declining due to decades of fire suppression and forestry, which have caused many open ponderosa pine forests to be filled in by dense Douglas fir.<sup>2</sup>
- The main threats to this species include fire suppression and fuel management (understory vegetation removal). Forest harvesting in itself is not considered an important threat because Lewis's Woodpecker's preferred habitat contains tree densities too low for commercial forestry.<sup>6</sup>
- Unlike most woodpeckers, Lewis's Woodpecker appears to benefit from salvage logging (e.g., up to 40% removal of snags >23 cm dbh), provided nest trees are retained (see Stand-level Recommendations).<sup>4,7</sup>

## STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- When salvage logging burned ponderosa pine/Douglas fir forest, the following retention patch characteristics are recommended:
  - Patches should be of variable size but greater than 1 ha<sup>8</sup>, and reach an average minimum snag density of 6 snags/ha within the salvaged area.<sup>9</sup>
  - Patches should contain relatively severely burned trees.<sup>10</sup>
  - Patches should contain high densities of large-diameter ponderosa pine, black cottonwood, or Douglas fir snags with evidence of heartrot, broken tops, or broken limbs.<sup>8</sup> Where possible, retain trees >50 cm dbh.<sup>9</sup>
- Large-diameter trees and snags, including high-cut stumps or stubs (e.g., 5 m in height) dispersed across the salvaged area will also likely contribute to habitat quality while maintaining open conditions.<sup>8,11</sup>
- Patches retained on steep slopes are not likely to contribute to high-value nesting habitat.<sup>5</sup>
- Near potential or known nest areas, strategic silviculture may improve foraging habitat by maintaining high understory diversity