



# Northern Flicker

*(Colaptes auratus)*

STATUS

SARA NO STATUS  
 Alberta SECURE

British Columbia YELLOW  
 Saskatchewan NO STATUS

PRIMARY HABITAT

Deciduous or Mixed-Conifer

TERRITORY SIZE

~25 ha up to >100 ha

NEST TYPE

Cavity (snag)

NEST REUSE

Common

STAND LEVEL

Aspen >35 cm dbh with signs of disease or damage retained within harvests, singly or in patches.

LANDSCAPE LEVEL

Heterogeneous landscapes containing late- and early-seral forests.

This woodpecker is easily identified by the dark polka-dots on its underside, although its call sounds quite similar to that of the Pileated Woodpecker. The Northern Flicker spends a lot of time foraging for insects on the ground.

BREEDING WINDOW



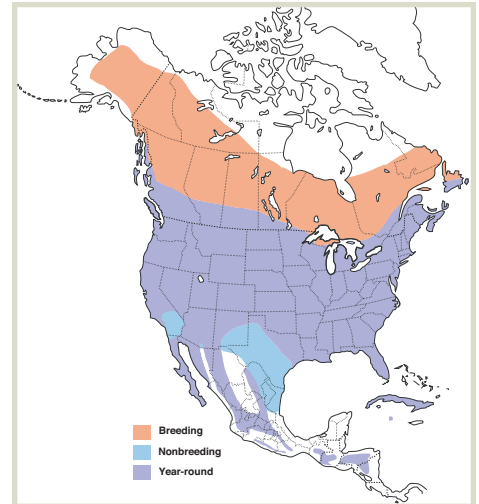
## HABITAT ECOLOGY

- The Northern Flicker is a ground-foraging species found in a wide range of forest habitats including deciduous-dominated and mixed-conifer stands. It is typically found along in or near forest edges and open woodlands.<sup>1</sup>
  - This species is most common in <30 year-old burned forests, suggesting the high importance of burned stands.<sup>2</sup>
- Northern Flickers mainly excavate cavities in aspen >35 cm dbh, which they will preferentially select even in conifer-leading stands.<sup>3-5</sup> They prefer recently dead trees with up to 50% of branches and bark missing<sup>4</sup> and/or false tinder conks.<sup>6</sup>
  - Northern Flickers may preferentially select nest trees where many suitable nest trees occur within a 10 m radius.<sup>6</sup>

## RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Retention harvesting appears to benefit Northern Flicker habitat in deciduous or deciduous-coniferous forests. They have responded positively to patch retention and riparian buffers totalling ~20% forest cover<sup>7</sup> and large aggregated harvests containing 29–33% merchantable retention.<sup>3</sup>
- This species was likely to be found in young regenerating clearcuts (1–11 years postharvest), possibly due to increased ground-foraging opportunities.<sup>8</sup> Given the Northern Flicker’s large territory size, it seems likely that nearby unharvested forest was an important source of nest trees.
- However, in dry mixed-conifer forests (ponderosa pine/Douglas fir), salvage logging with 40% retention of snags >23 cm dbh caused Northern Flicker to decline relative to burned, unsalvaged forest.<sup>9,10</sup>
- Harvesting and/or fragmentation may make Northern Flicker more vulnerable to nest theft by European Starlings in dry mixed-conifer forests of interior BC.<sup>11</sup>

## RANGE MAP



## STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Managers should prioritize aspen >35 cm dbh with false tinder conks and/or recently dead aspen for retention. Residual patches <0.5 ha and single trees provide short-term benefits, while larger patches may have greater longevity.<sup>3,6,12</sup>
- During salvage logging of burned stands, large-diameter snags should be prioritized for retention. In western woodlands, an average snag density of 93 snags per 100 ha is predicted to be optimal.<sup>1</sup>