



This owl is named for the way its plumage looks like that of a hawk. Active during the day, the Northern Hawk Owl likes to perch on top of the most prominent trees, making it easy to spot (and a favourite of birders).

Northern Hawk Owl

(Surnia ulula)

STATUS

SARA **NO STATUS**
 Alberta **SECURE**

British Columbia **YELLOW**
 Saskatchewan **NO STATUS**

PRIMARY HABITAT

Coniferous/riparian/early-seral

TERRITORY SIZE

>50 ha to hundreds of ha

NEST TYPE

Cavity

NEST REUSE

Common

STAND LEVEL

Retain cavity trees, aspen >35 cm dbh, and tall trees/snags without foliage, singly or in patches.

LANDSCAPE LEVEL

Habitat heterogeneity including burned forest, old forest, and wet areas.

BREEDING WINDOW



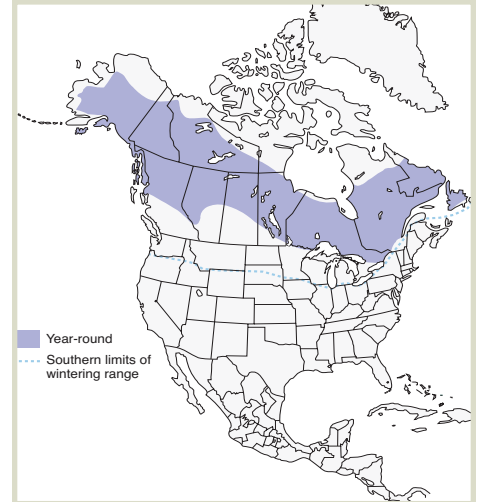
HABITAT ECOLOGY

- The Northern Hawk Owl lives in the boreal forest year-round, where it is mainly found in moderately dense coniferous or mixedwood forests.^{1,2}
 - Key habitat features for this species include forest edges from which they hunt for small mammals,¹ tall hunting perches (including residual trees, snags, or stumps within openings),² and nest trees (see below).
 - Northern Hawk Owls are often found near water, including riparian closed conifer forests.¹ They are also found in burned forests, which typically provide hunting, perching, and nesting habitats.^{1,3}
- This species nests in old Pileated Woodpecker and natural tree cavities. Hollow stubs,¹ broken-topped snags,² and aspen >35 cm dbh with signs of damage or decay^{4,5} are all potential nest trees.

RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- The Northern Hawk Owl's response to forest management in North America is not well-studied.
- Given this species' habitat ecology, it is generally expected to be negatively impacted by very large (e.g., >100 ha) clearcuts that do not contain any retention.²
- In contrast, retention harvesting is expected to benefit Northern Hawk Owls by increasing prey populations, providing open areas for hunting, and maintaining nest trees and perches. These benefits are expected to last ~15 years postharvest.²
- Burned coniferous or mixed forests provide high-quality habitats, but rapid regeneration reduces habitat value after ~8 years in some regions.³

RANGE MAP



STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- If the following features are maintained within harvest blocks, foraging habitat for Northern Hawk Owls is expected to increase:
 - Tall perches (singly or in patches), especially trees without dense foliage and/or snags and in cutblocks >2 ha.¹
 - Existing or potential nest trees: trees, snags, or stumps with cavities, broken-topped snags, and aspen >35 cm dbh with damage or signs of decay (e.g., false tinder conks). Nest trees can be retained along edges and within patches.^{1,4,5}
- Shrub suppression through silviculture in 11–15 year-old cutblocks may maintain foraging habitat value for longer.¹
- During salvage logging, operators should retain patches containing large-diameter snags and trees/snags with visible cavities to reduce the negative effects of salvaging on nest availability.^{1,3}