



One of the largest North American woodpeckers, the Pileated Woodpecker is easily spotted thanks to its bright red crest and loud call that resembles manic laughter. Many species reuse old Pileated Woodpecker cavity nests.

# Pileated Woodpecker

*(Dryocopus pileatus)*

## STATUS

SARA

Alberta

NO STATUS

SENSITIVE

British Columbia

Saskatchewan

YELLOW

NO STATUS

## PRIMARY HABITAT

Deciduous, mixedwood, dry mixed-conifer

## NEST TYPE

Cavity (mainly deciduous)

## STAND LEVEL

Aspen >35 cm dbh with conks or western larch, ponderosa pine, or black cottonwood >75 cm dbh.

## BREEDING WINDOW



## TERRITORY SIZE

~2,500 ha (highly variable)

## NEST REUSE

Same area

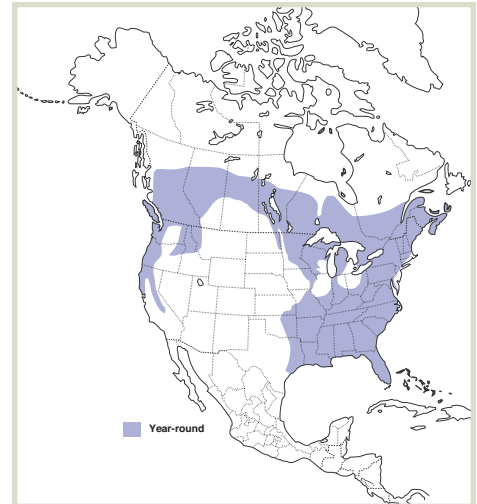
## LANDSCAPE LEVEL

Uneven-aged management and large retention patches within aggregated harvests.

## HABITAT ECOLOGY

- Pileated Woodpeckers are found in a wide range of forest types, including deciduous forests, mixedwoods, and dry mixed-conifer forests. Their occurrence is mainly driven by their need for large-diameter, decaying trees or snags which can be excavated for nests and roosts, and insect-infested deadwood for foraging.<sup>1</sup>
  - In deciduous and mixed deciduous-coniferous forests, optimal nesting trees are >35 cm dbh, decay class 2 (live and unhealthy), and have 10–25 conks on average.<sup>2</sup>
  - In dry mixed-conifer forests, optimal nesting trees include western larch, riparian black cottonwood, and ponderosa pine, although Douglas-fir is used to a smaller extent.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Due to their need for large, old trees for nesting and foraging, this species is mainly found in older forests, as well as forest stands containing snags and trees for foraging and nesting.<sup>5,6</sup> Unlike some other woodpecker species, the Pileated Woodpecker is not associated with burned forests.<sup>7,8</sup>

## RANGE MAP



## RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- The main impact of intensive harvesting is the removal of the large-diameter live and dead trees that Pileated Woodpeckers need for nesting, foraging, and roosting.<sup>1</sup>
- This species' response to retention harvesting has been mixed.<sup>2,9</sup> Regardless, they are rare or absent in clearcuts without residual trees up to at least 25 years postharvest,<sup>10</sup> indicating that harvest strategies that include retention mitigate harvest effects at the very least and provide some foraging and nesting opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

## STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Retention recommendations focus on identifying and protecting existing and potential cavity trees and other coarse woody debris for foraging. Retention anchor points include:
  - Aspen trees with existing cavities should be used as retention anchor points, particularly if they are still alive or not heavily decayed as they will last longer.<sup>12</sup> Additional aspen with the following characteristics should also be conserved in patches: >35 cm dbh, >25 m tall, with 10–25 false tinder conks and no live branches for 70% of the tree's height.<sup>2,11</sup>
  - Large-diameter western larch (77–91 cm dbh), ponderosa pine (76–96 cm dbh) within mixed ponderosa pine/Douglas fir groves, and black cottonwood (75–100 cm dbh) are recommended as retention patch anchor points where aspen is unavailable.<sup>4</sup> Unlike aspen, broken-topped snags and trees/snags with existing cavities are a high priority, as these species and are more easily excavated when they have more decay.<sup>4</sup>
  - Standing live and/or dead trees with visible carpenter ant colonization at the base (fine sawdust piles, woodpecker foraging holes, basal scars, etc.).<sup>6</sup>
- While heavily-decayed snags containing cavities may be too rotted for nesting, they may be suitable foraging habitat.<sup>13</sup>