



Townsend's Warbler

(Setophaga townsendii)

STATUS

SARA NO STATUS
 Alberta SECURE

British Columbia YELLOW
 Saskatchewan ABSENT

PRIMARY HABITAT
 Canopy (spruce)

TERRITORY SIZE
 Unknown/unreported

NEST TYPE
 Trees, shrubs, stumps near water

NEST REUSE
 No

STAND LEVEL
 Large-diameter grand fir, Douglas fir, and white spruce in patches and high overstory retention.

LANDSCAPE LEVEL
 Large, old upland conifer forests (extended rotation or set-asides).

BREEDING WINDOW



The Townsend's Warbler is a stunning songbird, yet it has been studied much less than other warblers. Its song is similar to the Black-throated Green Warbler, but with a quicker final note: "see-see-see-see-seePTCheee".

Photo by F. Veronesi

HABITAT ECOLOGY

- The Townsend's Warbler is found in a range of forests including mature fir in the Pacific Northwest, interior mixed conifer forests, and coniferous and mixed deciduous-coniferous interior, sub-boreal, and boreal forests.¹
- This species is most strongly associated with unharvested old forests.¹
 - In interior mixed conifer forests, they prefer to nest where there are high volumes of grand and Douglas fir, and prefer to forage on grand fir and western larch.²
 - In boreal and sub-boreal forests, they prefer to nest on large-diameter white spruce in white spruce-dominated forests. Medium-diameter spruce (15–38 cm dbh) were used for foraging and, in Alaska, alder and paper birch.³

RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- While direct studies of the Townsend's Warbler's response to forest management are limited, their habitat associations suggest that reductions of mature and older-than-rotation forests are a threat.¹
- In northern Rocky Mountain forests of the United States, they were most common in mature and old forests, and declines were attributed to harvesting.^{4,5}
- They were, however, more abundant in logged than in burned stands in southeastern BC, with higher abundances in cutblocks with high levels of overstory conifer retention.⁶

STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Given the Townsend's Warbler's preferred nesting habitats, large-diameter grand fir, Douglas fir or white spruce are recommended for retention. These trees may provide suitable nesting habitat once surrounding regenerating trees reach a minimum dbh of 15 cm.
 - Of these large diameter trees, trees with thick, dense foliage should be prioritized for retention as they conceal nests from predators.⁷
 - High levels of overstory retention (e.g., up to 320 stems/ha) or high-grading are recommended in at least some harvest blocks in lieu of clearcutting or low-retention treatments.⁶

RANGE MAP

