



# Varied Thrush

*(Ixoreus naevius)*

**STATUS**

SARA  
Alberta

NO STATUS  
SECURE

British Columbia  
Saskatchewan

YELLOW  
ABSENT

**PRIMARY HABITAT**  
Old coniferous

**TERRITORY SIZE**  
Unknown, ~7 ha suspected

**NEST TYPE**  
Variable, often understory vegetation

**NEST REUSE**  
Rare but site fidelity

**STAND LEVEL**  
Entries <10 ha, understory protection, and riparian buffers >30–35 m wide.

**LANDSCAPE LEVEL**  
Large, old, wet upland coniferous forests, possibly >16 ha (more research needed).

**BREEDING WINDOW**



The Varied Thrush seems like it would be hard to miss, with its bold orange and black plumage and loud, drawn-out song. But it is actually quite shy and lives mainly in dark, wet forests where it forages on the ground for insects.

**HABITAT ECOLOGY**

- The Varied Thrush is generally considered a species of mature and old coniferous forests.<sup>1</sup> They are associated with old, unharvested cedar/hemlock and spruce/fir forests,<sup>2</sup> lodgepole pine/white spruce,<sup>3</sup> Douglas fir/western hemlock/western red alder,<sup>4</sup> and black spruce/tamarack.
  - They are associated with wet, upland, old forests<sup>5</sup> and positively associated with herbs, ferns, and berry-producing shrubs in the understory.<sup>6</sup>
  - The Varied Thrush is often described as a species of dark, wet, and mossy forests.<sup>1</sup>
- Nests are usually built in the understory vegetation of mature forests (and sometimes second-growth). They may be built on the lower branches of a small conifer, on the ground, in shrubs, or more.<sup>1</sup>
- While Varied Thrushes do not reuse nests, they tend to build nests near or even on top of old nests.<sup>1</sup>

**RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT**

- This old forest-associated species is rarely observed in young harvested stands, including retention harvests. It was absent from clearcuts and retention harvests<sup>7</sup> and declined in thinned stands.<sup>8–10</sup>
- Two studies of riparian buffers in the Pacific Northwest found conflicting results. Riparian buffers >30 m supported Varied Thrushes, however it is unclear whether these buffers will support numbers comparable to unharvested forest.<sup>11,12</sup>
- Low-intensity harvests (e.g., single-tree up to 10 ha openings totaling 30% volume removal within 30 ha blocks) mitigated harvesting effects, particularly in harvests <10 ha.<sup>13</sup>
- The Varied Thrush showed higher resilience to harvesting in the ESSF dry cool biogeoclimatic zone, where it was common in second-growth stands >7 years (compared with the MS dry cool biogeoclimatic zone, where it was common in second-growth stands >27 years).<sup>14</sup>

**STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Very small harvesting entries (<10 ha) may reduce negative short-term effects on the Varied Thrush,<sup>13</sup> and understory protection may improve habitat value after >7 years,<sup>14</sup> in Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir forests.
- Riparian buffers >30–35 m are recommended in old conifer habitats, however these may only provide marginal benefits.<sup>11,12</sup>
- Large conifers with low foliage density near the top, near water or drainages and on steep slopes, may represent potential song posts and thus be useful as retention patch anchor points. However, this recommendation is derived from research conducted in coastal redwood forests and local studies are suggested.<sup>15</sup>

**RANGE MAP**

