This soot-coloured woodpecker hunts for bark and wood-boring beetles in burned and very old coniferous forests. The subtle sound of it flicking bark off trees, or drilling for beetle grubs, announces its presence.

Black-backed Woodpecker

(Picoides arcticus)

STATUS

SARA	NO STATUS	British Columbia	YELLOW
Alberta	SENSITIVE	Saskatchewan	NO STATUS

PRIMARY HABITAT
Burned Coniferous

TERRITORY SIZE
20–825 ha

NEST TYPE
Cavity (conifer snag)

NEST REUSE
Rare

STAND LEVEL
Retention patches of conifer snags >23–40 cm dbh during salvage

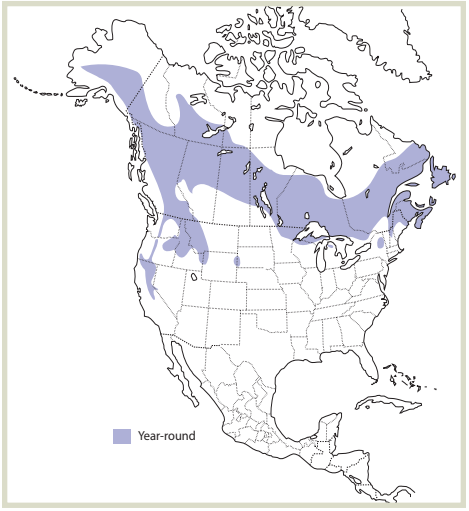
LANDSCAPE LEVEL
Young (<8-year-old) burns and coniferous forest stands >110 years old

BREEDING WINDOW

HABITAT ECOLOGY

- Black-backed Woodpeckers are most common in 2–8 years post-fire conifer-dominated forests that have not been logged or salvaged.[1–3]
  - Forest types include spruce, tamarack, Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, and jack pine.[4]
  - They are negatively associated with high densities of deciduous trees.[2]
  - They are most abundant in stands with high densities of smaller-diameter burned conifers (e.g., ≥23 cm dbh in Douglas fir/ponderosa pine[5] or 14–19 cm dbh in boreal jack pine/spruce[3]).
  - They excavate nests in large-diameter trees and snags with low decay.[1]
- Conifer forests >110 years old likely provide important habitat when recently burned forest is not available.[3]

RANGE MAP



RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Black-backed woodpeckers are strongly negatively affected by postfire salvage logging, which removes both foraging and nesting habitat.[4]
  - Salvage logging of Mountain Pine Beetle-killed stands may also have a negative effect.[6]
  - Within salvage-logged stands, woodpeckers nested in retention patches even when dispersed trees were available.[5]
- Summer wildfires in coniferous forests create higher-quality foraging habitat than fall/winter prescribed burns or MPB infestations.[7]

STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Patch retention during salvage logging of burned forests is strongly recommended:
  - Retention patches containing both small-diameter trees for foraging and larger-diameter trees for nesting are recommended. Average recommended densities across the salvaged area are >104–123 trees or snags/ha (>23 cm dbh).[5]
  - Retention recommendations range from trees or snags >23 cm dbh for Black-backed Woodpeckers[5], to >40 cm dbh to provide habitat for a range of primary and secondary cavity nesters including Black-backed Woodpeckers.[8]
- Given the high densities of burned trees/snags preferred by this species, clearcut areas exceeding 2.5 ha are discouraged within salvage areas.[4]
- Planners should include patches located far from the edges of unburned forest, as unburned forest is a source of nest predators.[9] Black spruce-dominated forest is the exception to this recommendation.[10]