

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL
(AEGOLUIS ACADICUS)

Navajo/Federal Statuses: NESL G4 / MBTA; not listed under the ESA.

Distribution: Breeding range includes most of northern and western US, Canada, and central Mexico. No documented breeding on Navajo Nation, but potential exists in forests and wooded canyons of Chuska Mountains, Defiance Plateau, Black Mesa, and Navajo Mountain.

Habitat: Nests in tree cavities in relatively open ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, or mixed conifer forests; may also nest in old-growth riparian woodlands. Wintering habitat is variable but dense vegetation is critical.

Similar Species: Western Screech-owl has ear tufts and black-streaked, gray breast; Flammulated Owl has small ear tufts and brown eyes; Northern Pygmy-owl has long tail, two black nape spots, and inconspicuous facial disc; all can be distinguished by calls.

Phenology:

- e.MAR-m.MAY: pair formation, courtship, nest-site selection
- m.MAR-e.JUN: egg-laying and incubation (27-29 days)
- m.APR-e.JUL: nestling period (33 days)
- m.MAY-e.AUG: fledging of young
- e.JUN-1.SEP: independence of young
- >1.SEP: overwintering

Survey Method: ≥1 survey during 1 APR-30 JUN at an effort sufficient to have high likelihood of detecting the species; if protocol surveys for the Mexican Spotted Owl are necessary for project, they are typically sufficient to detect this species as well.

Avoidance: No activity within 0.2 km (1/8 mi) of nest site during 1 MAR-1 AUG; no habitat alteration year-round within 0.2 km of nest site (=12 ha or 30 acre).

References:

Cannings, R.J. 1993. Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*). In The Birds of North America, No.42 (A.Poole and F.Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. (description p.2)