

DUSKY GROUSE
(DENDRAGAPUS OBSCURUS)

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

Distribution: Resident to all major mountain ranges of western U.S. and Canada, from AZ and NM to British Columbia. On Navajo Nation, they are known only from Chuska Mountains with potential habitat occurring at all elevations, but greatest potential is in high-elevation pine and fir forests, especially during winter.

Habitat: Nests primarily in mixed-conifer stands with relatively open tree canopies, but possibly in nearly all montane forest habitats, especially those dominated by Douglas-fir with varying amounts of aspen, and possibly ponderosa pine. Winter habitat is nearly exclusively montane conifer forests composed of fir or spruce, and occasionally pinyon pine.

Similar Species: no other montane grouse on Navajo Nation.

Phenology:

- e.APR-e.MAY: arrival to breeding areas, pair formation, mating
- e.MAY-l.JUL: egg-laying/incubation (25-28 days)
- e.JUN-l.JUL: hatching¹, young leave nest within 12-24 hours
- e.JUN-l.SEP: young travel with female parent
- ≥l.SEP: independence and dispersal of young
- ¹peak hatch period is likely m.JUN-e.JUL

Survey Method: ≥1 pedestrian survey with high-power optics recommended for breeding pairs or territorial males during 1 APR-15 JUN. Territorial males are very vocal (throughout day) and perform loud flutter-flights (dawn and dusk) during peak breeding.

Avoidance: No activity within 0.2 km (1/8 mi) of active nest site during 1 APR-15 JUL; buffer may be less depending on activity type and duration, but not less than 0.1 km; no habitat alteration year-round within 0.2 km of nest site (=12 ha or 30 acre).

References:

- Zwicker, F.C. 1996. Blue Grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No.15 (A.Poole, P.Stettenheim and F.Gill, Eds.) The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. (description p.2)