

MEXICAN SPOTTED OWL
(*STRIX OCCIDENTALIS LUCIDA*)

Navajo/Federal Statuses: NESL G3/listed threatened 16 MAR 1993 (58FR:14248) with designated Critical Habitat 31 AUG 2004 (69FR:53181); MBTA.

Distribution: The *lucida* ssp. range includes central CO and central UT, south through AZ and NM into Mexico. On the Navajo Nation, owls are known to occur within, or adjacent to, the Chuska Mountain Range and Defiance Plateau, Canyon de Chelly, Black Mesa and the extensive canyonlands to the north. Numerous other potential areas exist that have yet to be surveyed.

Habitat: Three distinct types: 1) mid-aged to mature mixed-conifer stands dominated by Douglas-fir, typically on mountain slopes, with moderate to dense canopies and multiple canopy layers; and 2) steep-walled, narrow canyons (or side and hanging canyons in wide canyons) often with riparian vegetation and cool microclimates; and 3) moderately sloped drainages with Douglas fir, in pinyon-juniper woodland (e.g. Black Mesa). Not known to nest in ponderosa pine-oak forests on Navajo Nation, but will use a variety of habitats, including pinyon-juniper and clearings when foraging.

Similar Species: Great Horned Owl is ≤ 15 cm larger; Long-eared Owl is ≤ 8 cm smaller, both have 'ear tufts' and yellow eyes; only other owls with dark eyes are Flammulated Owl (which is 28 cm smaller) and Barn Owl (which has a white, heart-shaped face and whitish- or cinnamon-colored body).

Phenology:

- l.FEB-l.MAR: pair formation, courtship, nest-site selection
- m.MAR-l.MAY: egg-laying and incubation (30 days)
- l.APR-l.JUN: nestling period (34-36 days)
- l.MAY-l.JUN: fledging of young
- l.JUN-l.AUG: post-fledging period (60-90 days)
- e.SEP-l.OCT: independence of young, dispersal from natal area

Formal Survey Protocol: For project clearance, 2 consecutive years of 4 complete surveys each year between 1 MAR and 31 AUG, with ≥ 5 days between surveys; no more than 1 survey in MAR, minimum of 2 surveys before 30 JUN, and no more than 1 survey in each of JUL and AUG; daytime follow-up visit is necessary to find roost/nest if birds are detected during nocturnal survey. If bird(s) are present, monitoring should continue to 15 JUN to verify breeding status. Federal permit required. US Fish & Wildlife Service. 2003. [Mexican Spotted Owl survey protocol](#). Unpublished document.

Avoidance: No habitat alteration within 40-ha (100 acre) Core Area around nest; certain silvicultural treatments may occur during 1 SEP-28 FEB within remainder of 243-ha (600 acre) Protected Activity Center (PAC) as per Recovery Plan for the Mexican spotted owl, pp.84-89. No activity within 0.4 km ($\frac{1}{4}$ mi) of known nest/roost site during 1 MAR-31 AUG, or within 0.4 km of PAC if nest/roost site unknown.

References:

- Gutierrez, R.J., A.B. Franklin, and W.S. Lahaye. 1995. Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis*). In *The Birds of North America*, No.179 (A.Poole and F.Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. (description p.2)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. 1995. [Recovery plan for the Mexican spotted owl](#): Vol.1. Albuquerque, NM. 172pp.