

MEXICAN SPOTTED OWL
(Strix occidentalis lucida)

STATUS: Threatened (58 FR 14248, March 16, 1993) with critical habitat (69 FR 53182, August 31, 2004).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Medium-sized owl with large dark eyes and no ear tufts. Plumage is brown with numerous white spots and posterior underparts have short, horizontal bars or spots. Length is about 0.4 m (17 in) and wingspan is 1.0 m (3.3 ft).

HABITAT: Occurs in varied habitat, consisting of mature montane forest and woodland, shady wooded canyons, and steep canyons. In forested habitat, uneven-aged stands with a high canopy closure, high tree density, and a sloped terrain appear to be key habitat components. They can also be found in mixed conifer and pine-oak vegetation types. Generally nests in older forests of mixed conifer or ponderosa pine/Gambel oak. Nests are found in live trees in natural platforms (e.g., dwarf mistletoe brooms), snags, and on canyon walls. Elevation ranges from 1,249 to 2,743 m (4,100 to 9,000 ft).

RANGE: Historical: Range extended from the southern Rocky mountains in Colorado and the Colorado Plateau in southern Utah southward through Arizona, New Mexico, and far western Texas, through the Sierra Madre Occidental and Oriental, to the mountains at the southern end of the Mexican Plateau.

Current: Present range is thought to be similar to the historical range. Populations in Arizona are patchily distributed and occur where appropriate habitat is present throughout all but the arid southwestern portion of the state.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Threatened because of destruction and modification of nesting habitat. The primary threat is believed to be unnatural fuel loadings and the resultant threat of high-severity, stand replacing wildfire.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: The majority of the owls are found on National Forests lands, also found on tribal lands, National Parks Service lands, and on Bureau of Land Management lands.

NOTES: The Recovery Plan for the Mexican Spotted Owl was completed in December 1995 and is available online at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/RecoveryPlans/MexicanSpottedOwl.pdf>.

The plan is currently being revised and a draft is expected for public release in spring 2008.

Listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.

Critical habitat is designated in Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai counties in Arizona (August 31, 2004). Critical habitat also occurs in New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. Tribal lands within Arizona are excluded from Mexican spotted owl critical habitat designation under Section 4(b)(2) of the Act.