

MEXICAN SPOTTED OWL
(Strix occidentalis lucida)

STATUS: Threatened (58 FR 14248, March 16, 1993) with critical habitat (66 FR 8530, February 1, 2001).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Medium-sized owl with large dark eyes and no ear tufts. Species closely resembles the barred owl. 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 type. Nests are found in live trees, snags, and on canyon walls. Elevation ranges from 1,249 to 2,743 m (4,100 to 9,000 ft).

RANGE: Historic: 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 historic range. Populations in Arizona are patchily distributed and occur in all but the arid southwestern portion of the state or much of the lowland riparian zones.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Threatened because of destruction and modification of nesting habitat.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: 90% of the owls are found on National Forests, 5% on tribal lands, 4% on National Parks, and 1% on Bureau of Land Management lands.

NOTES: A Recovery Plan was completed in December 1995 and is available online at: <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/Documents/RecoveryPlans/MexicanSpottedOwl.pdf>.

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

Critical habitat is designated in Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Graham, Mohave, and Pima counties in Arizona (February 1, 2001). Critical habitat also occurs in New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. Forest Service lands within Arizona are excluded from critical habitat designation due to existing forest management plans.