

## American Three-toed Woodpecker - *Picoides tridactylus*

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSSU

NatureServe: G5 S3

Population Status: Population status and trends are unknown; species-specific surveys are needed due to current monitoring techniques that are not adequate to determine population status and trends

Limiting Factor: Habitat (and Climate Change): limiting factors are severe and continue to increase in severity; an increase in available habitat is anticipated due to beetle-killed trees and forest fires, but this species' response to habitat alterations resulting from climate change is unknown for the long-term, although benefits are suspected for the short-term

Comment: moved from NSS4 to NSSU due to unknown population status and trends

### Introduction

The American Three-toed Woodpecker occurs locally from northern Alaska across Canada south to southern New Mexico and New England. It occurs year-round in Wyoming and is scattered primarily across the western two-thirds of the State. The American Three-toed Woodpecker is considered an uncommon resident in Wyoming.

### Habitat

The American Three-toed Woodpecker inhabits mature and old growth coniferous forests, primarily above 2700 m (8900 ft) in eastern and central Wyoming but is found also at slightly lower elevations in the western part of the state. The critical mix of habitat elements that appear necessary to support viable populations are large, unfragmented blocks of unlogged mature and old-growth spruce-fir, Douglas fir and lodgepole pine forest; an abundance of dead, dying, and diseased trees to supply suitable nest sites and foraging substrates; and occasional disturbances (such as fire or beetle outbreaks) in high and mid elevation conifer forests. The species focuses its foraging on trees that are damaged by beetle infestations, fire, wind or other forms of stress. Within a few years after a fire or insect outbreak, use of such trees greatly decreases as the primary food source, bark and wood-boring beetles declines.

### Problems

- h Population status and trends are largely unknown in Wyoming.
- h With a relatively large home range and a close association with old-growth and mature conifer forests, this species is sensitive to forest harvesting and fragmentation.
- h Impacted by logging of old-growth and mature forests, fire suppression, salvage and suppression logging of burned and beetle-infested trees, and short logging rotations.

### Conservation Actions

- h Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- h Work cooperatively with other agencies to conduct surveys and manage habitat for this species.
- h Maintain dense forests of mature and old-growth conifers with an element of disturbance, and retain large-diameter trees and snags (at least 20 to 30 cm [8 to 12 in] in diameter at breast height) to supply suitable nest sites and foraging substrates.
- h Refrain from salvage logging recently burned coniferous forests for up to six years post-burn or until wood-boring insects decline. If salvage logging is inevitable, remove trees from one area of the burn only, leaving intact other areas that retain proper snag dimensions for this and other post-fire dependent species.
- h Prevent habitat loss due to fire suppression, loss of mature and old-growth forests, and removal of snags and insect-infested trees.
- h On a landscape scale, provide a continual supply (1 to 2% of the landscape) of recent stand replacement fires greater than 40 ha (100 ac) in size, with at least 50% of that total unsalvaged after burning.

### Monitoring/Research

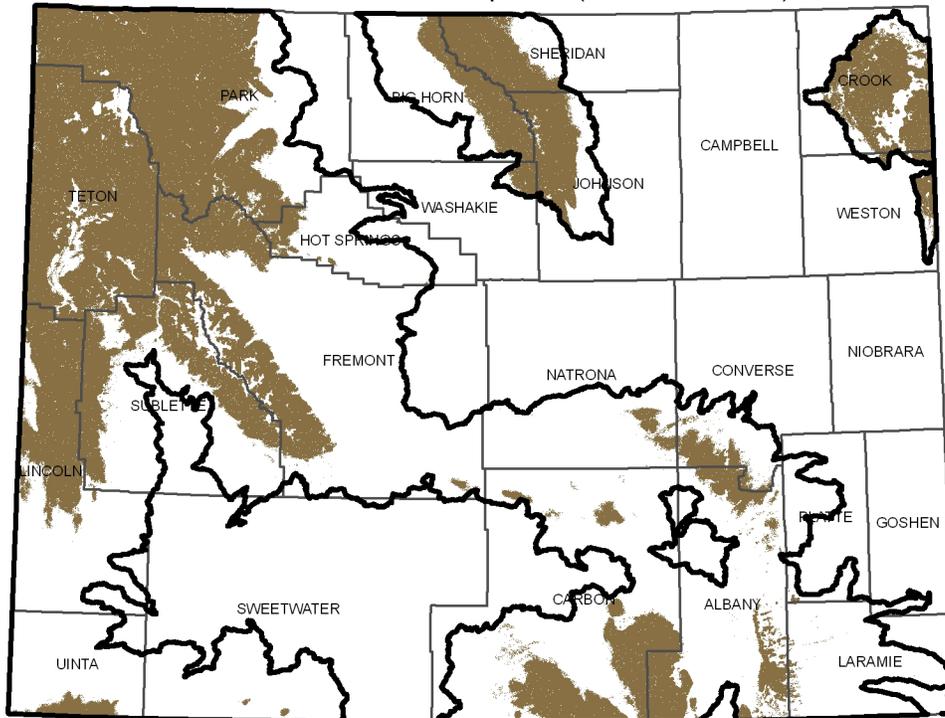
Additional information is needed on habitat use, diet, snag density requirements, and response to land management activities, especially forest harvest patterns and changes in fire regimes. Specific monitoring efforts are needed for this species as it is not covered adequately in the state-wide monitoring effort or by Breeding Bird surveys.

#### Recent Developments

The availability of habitat for this species has increased over the past several years as climate change and drought-related beetle infestations have resulted in greatly increased conifer mortality but foraging and nesting habitat in older age forests may decline significantly in the long-term given current trends.

#### References

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American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*)

SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.