



## Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program – Okanagan-Similkameen SPECIES FACTSHEET

The Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program, also known as WiTS, is a voluntary program that conserves wildlife tree habitats through volunteer monitoring (of wildlife trees and bird activity), landowner agreements, and community education. It was first established on Vancouver Island through the Federation of BC Naturalists and has recently expanded to include the Lower Mainland and Okanagan-Similkameen. In the Okanagan-Similkameen, WiTS will focus on five bird species at risk. This fact sheet introduces one of our regions target species, the Flammulated Owl. By identifying and monitoring nest sites for this owl, WiTS aims to assist its recovery and help protect its habitat.



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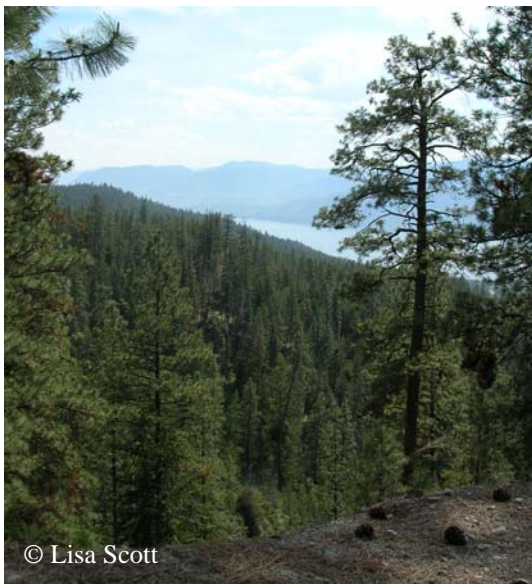
# Flammulated Owl

## What is a Flammulated Owl?

The Flammulated Owl (*Otus flammeolus*) is a small, secondary cavity nester that breeds in dry, old Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii glauca*) / Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) forests. In British Columbia, it breeds in the Southern Interior from the East Kootenays west to Princeton, Merritt and Lillooet, north to Williams Lake, Kamloops and Radium Hot Springs. Federally, the Flammulated Owl is considered a species of **Special Concern** due to altered composition and structure of mature Ponderosa pine / Douglas-fir forests. These habitat alterations are a result of timber harvest, fire suppression and livestock grazing.

## SIMILAR SPECIES:

- **Western Screech-Owl** (*Megascops kennicottii macfarlanei*) is much larger, has yellow eyes, feathered toes, and larger ear tufts.
- **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (*Aegolius acadicus*) is a bit larger, has yellow eyes, no ear tufts and broad reddish-brown streaks on its white chest.



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## DESCRIPTION:

- Very small owl with dark eyes, inconspicuous ear tufts and a rusty shoulder patch
- Greyish/rusty in colour with distinct dark flame-like feather variegation above dark eyes and incomplete brownish-grey facial disk.
- Body Length: 15-17 cm.
- Vocal call is a mellow, low-pitched “boot” (or “boo-boot”).

## DIET:

- Feeds almost exclusively on arthropods and abundant insect prey including noctuid moths, crickets and beetles. Uniquely adapted to foraging in open forest conditions. Occasionally eats vertebrates.

## HABITAT:

- Mature Douglas-fir forest with scattered large ponderosa pines, grassy openings, thickets of young trees and an abundance of wildlife trees with abandoned woodpecker cavities for nest sites.
- Breeding habitat occurs between 400 – 1375 metres
- Uses forest openings for foraging and adjacent patches of dense Douglas-fir for refuge.

## How can I help Flammulated Owls?

### Habitat Restoration

Flammulated Owls are at risk in our area primarily due to loss and alteration of their forest habitat. Most known occurrences of Flammulated Owls have been recorded on Crown land since they nest at mid-elevations above most private land holdings. The single greatest impact to Flammulated Owl breeding habitat is timber harvesting practices that fail to retain older trees and snags. Firewood cutting and removal of 'danger trees' can also reduce the availability of nest sites. Additionally, fire-suppression has resulted in closed canopies and high tree densities, attributes that are unfavorable to Flammulated Owls. If Douglas-fir thickets are left in patches, forest management could retain suitable Flammulated Owl habitat at a landscape level. Habitat regeneration will be enhanced by silvicultural systems that remove only a few old trees and retain some mature trees so that openings are created that can promote ponderosa pine regeneration.



### Did you know?

The Flammulated Owl is one of the smallest and most migratory owls in North America. It preys on large insects, such as crickets and moths.



### You can help improve Flammulated Owl habitat by:

- conserving mosaic stands of Douglas-fir and Ponderosa Pine with grassy openings, thickets, and wildlife trees containing abandoned woodpecker cavities for nesting.
- retaining standing dead trees in Douglas-fir/Ponderosa Pine forests wherever it is safe to do so.
- using manual thinning of young trees and, if feasible, low-intensity burning, to manage forests to produce more open habitats (*i.e.* 20-50% canopy closure) with healthier trees and understory vegetation.
- planting native trees and shrubs, or allowing natural vegetation to grow in the open understory of grazed woodlands. Bushy areas are required for foraging and safety.
- considering placing stewardship conservation agreements or covenants on your land to protect wildlife tree patches and important wildlife habitat.

### Monitoring

- Active from early-May and stay until late-August/early-September.
- Egg-laying occurs from mid-May through mid-June, with nestlings present approximately one month later and fledglings another month after that. (Clutch size 2-4 eggs).

### For more information on WiTS:

Lisa Scott, Regional Coordinator  
Ph: (250) 404-0115 Email: [witsos@shaw.ca](mailto:witsos@shaw.ca)

### To report Flammulated Owl sightings:

Bird Studies Canada: (250) 496-4049, or  
Partners in Flight BC/Yukon at (250) 490-8286



South Okanagan-  
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Stewardship Program



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