
THE BIRD COMMUNITY IN BEETLE OUTBREAK AREAS: SURVEYING FOR BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS AND OTHER SPECIES

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Most avian distribution studies in Montanan conclude that black-backed woodpeckers are relatively restricted to post-fire areas. However, some studies elsewhere in the West have located black-backed woodpeckers in beetle outbreak areas. During the summer of 2006, the Landbird Monitoring Program, a collaborative effort between the Avian Science Center and the USDA Forest Service, surveyed for birds via point counts and surveyed for woodpeckers via broadcast callers to assess the bird community in beetle outbreak areas. We used GIS and grid-based, off-road sampling design to determine study sites and surveyed on five National Forests. We found very few black-backed woodpeckers associated with beetle outbreak areas. However, the bird community was varied and other species appeared to respond to the presence of beetles. Additionally, because the ASC also conducted a concurrent, near identical study in post-fire habitats, we compared detections of black-backed and other woodpecker species between these different habitats. We highlight these findings, discuss plans for upcoming field work, and provide details of current Avian Science Center happenings.