

Northern Spotted Owl Is Threatened

In June, 1990, the USFWS designated the northern spotted owl a threatened species throughout its range under provisions of the Endangered Species Act. The scientific basis for this determination is presented in a concise report prepared by a 5-person "listing team" of USFWS biologists (Anderson et al, 1990).

Briefly, the USFWS team examined the habitat relationships, population dynamics, rates of habitat fragmentation, and the existing regulatory mechanisms to protect the bird before recommending threatened status. In one particularly interesting comparison of owl occurrence and reproductive performance they conclude that the "... spotted owl habitat in protected areas [e.g. wilderness areas and parks] is too fragmented, isolated, and poor in quality to support a viable population of northern spotted owls." These independent analyses support and expand interpretations on the status of the owl made earlier by the Interagency Scientific Committee (Thomas et al, 1990). They also underscore NPS concerns that persistence of the birds in national parks, particularly the mountain parks of Washington and Oregon, may depend upon retaining populations outside.

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References

- Anderson, D.R. et al. 1990. 1990 Status review, Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report. 95 pp.
- Thomas, J.W. et al. 1990. A conservation strategy for the northern spotted owl. Report of the Interagency Scientific Committee, May, 1990. 427 pp.