

Westbank Community Forest



Alex Bodden

This booklet describes how Ntityix Resources LP avoids harming *skəkʷákaʔ* (birds), their habitats, and nests during forest operations on Westbank First Nation's community forest.

Since time immemorial, the Syilx people have been self-reliant and well provided for through their careful and considered use of the land and resources. Through Captikwł (traditional learnings) Syilx people have maintained a sacred responsibility to care for *tmxʷulaxʷ* (the land) and *timixʷ* (all living things).

Wildlife are relatives of the people and give of themselves to provide traditional foods, goods, and cultural values. Other wildlife is of spiritual significance, and some species are at-risk and in need of assistance. For these reasons, Ntityix Resources LP wishes to operate such that its activities maintain, support, and potentially enhance *timixʷ* within its Westbank First Nation operating area.

Migratory birds and other birds are in decline over much of North America. The law protects birds and bird nests containing eggs or nestlings, and the nests of some birds that re-use their nests, active or not.



Westbank First Nation's Community Forest Tenures



IT'S ALL ABOUT HABITAT

Birds need quiet spaces in the right places!

One in three birds in Canada depend on forests. Forest stand complexity, the presence of snags, number of vegetation layers, size and abundance of deciduous trees, and distance to water are important factors affecting the likelihood of birds nesting in a forested area.

Areas near streams, wet places, and wetlands in the forest are especially important to bird nesting, foraging, and resting.

About 80% of forest bird species in Canada do not winter in Canada. Forest birds that nest in Canada but migrate to winter elsewhere face threats and habitat loss not only in Canada, but also during their migration, and where they winter too.

Some forest birds require shrubby, young forest habitats created by fire, floods, wind damage, insects, and logging. Others require intact mature or older forest with a variety of large trees, deciduous patches, canopy gaps, standing snags and windfalls.

Threats and habitat loss need to be addressed everywhere these birds occur. Here in Canada, it is especially important to protect quiet spaces in the right places to allow forest and other birds to breed and raise their young successfully.

In general, young (about 3 to 30 years old) and mature and older forest (80+ years old) will contain higher densities of nesting birds than mid-aged forest (30 to 80 years old).



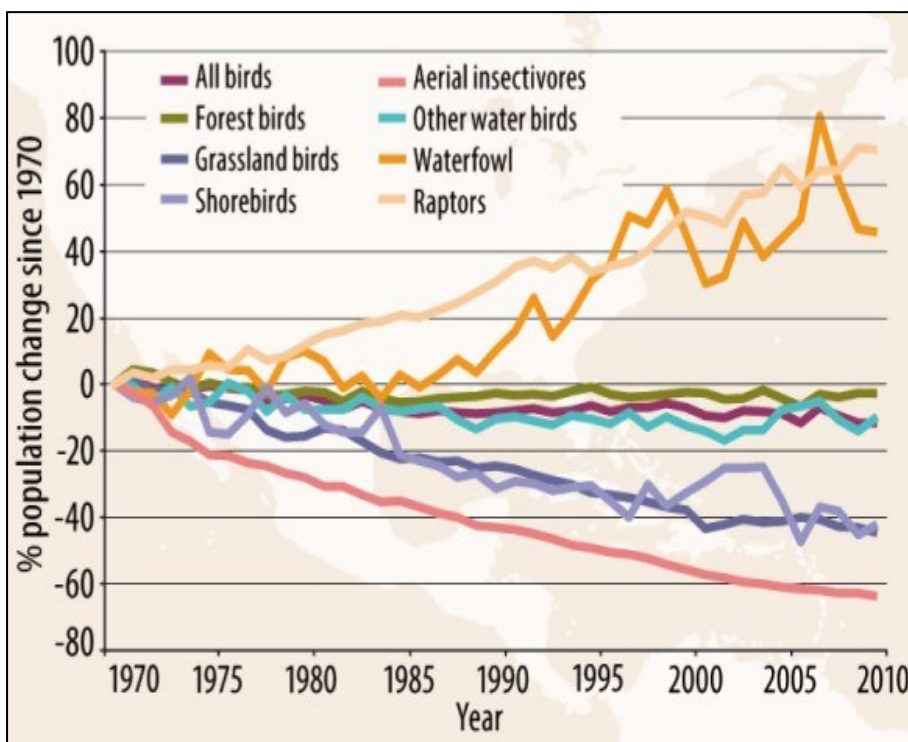
D. Bonta, Creative Commons

Grouse Tracks—Each winter, Ntityx staff survey previously harvested and planned logging areas for deer and other tracks. The knowledge gained will inform future forest management decisions.



Dave Gill

Nesting bird habitat retained in a Ntityx Resources cutblock. Deciduous tree patches, snags and shrubby areas are important habitats for forest bird nesting and foraging.



Forest bird numbers in Canada are declining but not as fast as in some other habitat types. Migratory forest birds face threats and habitat loss in Canada but also on migration and in their wintering areas. Forest birds that stay in Canada over winter are doing better than those that migrate.

Source: 2019-State-of-Canadas-Birds-1.pdf (nabci.net)

HOW DOES NTITYIX MANAGE FOR BIRD HABITAT?

Skəkʷákaʔ and other wildlife are important to the people. To help increase and sustain migratory and other *skəkʷákaʔ*, Ntityix manages bird habitat as part of its forestry plans; from the broad expanse of the landscape to the smallest cutblock.

Across the landscape

WFN’s community forest is large and the many values on the land are complex. For planning, Ntityix divided WFN’s forest tenures into 12 “Planning Units”. A plan for each Planning Unit will include information about that area important to WFN members, and will guide Ntityix’s activities in the unit, including for birds and other wildlife.

Landscape level conservation planning can help reduce the risk of harm to birds and other wildlife from forest operations by leaving a large and diverse part of the tenured forest intact and functional as wildlife habitat for all time. At a planning unit level, Ntityix will:

- Set aside about 1/3 of each planning unit as forest conservation zones and include important bird habitats in them.
- Protect patches of old forest in large contiguous conservation “blocks”.
- Provide a multi-aged forest with no more than about 25% mid-aged forest in each planning unit.
- Protect wide animal movement corridors that include bird habitats between and within planning units, and
- Adjust its operating schedules to avoid disturbing vegetation during the bird nesting period as much as feasible.

At each cutblock

Ntityix will take a risk avoidance and reduction approach when planning its site-specific forest activities (e.g., a cutblock, road or treatment area). Protecting high-quality habitats and avoiding activities during the bird nesting period or, when avoidance is not feasible, ensuring that bird disturbing activities are directed away from high-quality bird nesting habitats, will reduce the risk of harm, and help to conserve bird populations.

Ntityix will plan its activities to protect local habitats that help birds to nest and successfully raise their young by:

- Excluding clumps of dead standing snags, deciduous trees, wet areas, brushy sites, and known nests from harvest or treatment areas.
- Protecting streamside habitats with reserves and/or management zones of varying width, the minimum being a 20-metre-wide zone on each side of the stream where 50% of the mature trees within the zone will be protected.
- Protecting wetlands >5 hectares with a minimum adjacent 30-metre-wide no harvest reserve, with an additional management zone of 20 metres where no more than 10% of the merchantable trees will be harvested. The minimum width reserve zone will be 5 metres on wetlands <0.5 hectares in size.
- Retaining wildlife tree reserves, dispersed large Douglas-fir, and other valuable wildlife or culturally important trees within harvested areas.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Syilx Law & Responsibility

Under Syilx Law, people have a responsibility to the four food chiefs to look after *timix^w*, which includes the people. This is a relationship of reciprocity, where individual plants and animals may give of themselves to look after the people, in exchange for the people caring for *tmx^wulax^w* such that the plants and animals persist forever. To be consistent with Syilx Law, Ntityix will always seek to conserve populations of forest *skəkʷákaʔ* while responsibly managing the risk of harm to individual *skəkʷákaʔ*.

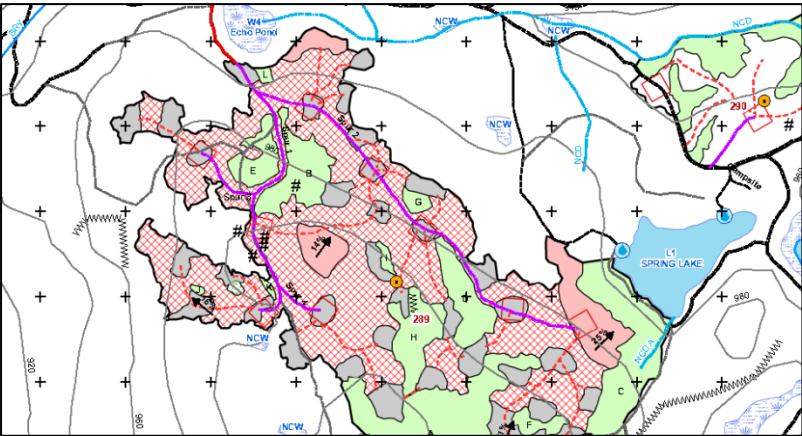


Federal & Provincial Law

Canada’s wildlife law protects most birds in Canada, and prohibits the unauthorized disturbance, destruction or “take” of migratory bird nests, eggs, nest shelters or duck boxes. This law applies to any activity whether directed purposefully at a protected nest or that is incidental to an otherwise lawful activity such as forest harvesting — a situation sometimes called “incidental take”.

BC’s wildlife law prohibits the destruction of a bird, its egg, or a bird’s nest when it is occupied by the bird or its egg. This law also prohibits destruction of eagle, heron, osprey, peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, and burrowing owl nests whether occupied or not.

Ntityix seeks to be compliant with all laws that protect *skəkʷákaʔ* and their nests.



A Ntityix fir/pine cutblock planned to reduce risk to nesting birds and other values – all but the solid pink and solid grey areas is retained forest.



Alex Bodden

Siwłk™ (water) is the lifeblood of our existence and that of all wildlife and plants. Managing for clean and abundant water by maintaining healthy streams and wetlands in WFN’s community forest is of utmost importance to Ntityix Resources LP.

SUSTAINING SKƏKƆÁKA? FOR THE FUTURE

Tmx™ulax™ is the foundation of Syilx life and culture. Sustainable use of land and resources honours our sacred responsibilities both to tmix™ and to future generations of people.

Ntityix aims to manage WFN’s community forest in ways that sustain the land and resources, while helping to reduce some of the impacts of human land use and the uncertain effects of our changing climate.

Ntityix knows that skəkƆáka? are important to the people, and that some are less abundant now than in the past. Ntityix seeks to manage WFN’s community forest for the diversity of all living things using measures to achieve high biodiversity as described in the former BC Forest Practices Code *Biodiversity Guidebook*.

In future, Ntityix may re-introduce fire into its forest activities to enhance food shrubs for skəkƆáka?, other wildlife, and for the people.

Syilx captikwł will sustain birds for the future.

Abundant skəkƆáka? tells us the land is healthy. We owe an eternal debt to the skəkƆáka? and all living things.

- Chief Chris Derickson



Birds need quiet spaces in the right places

CHALLENGES IN MANAGING FOR SKƏKƆÁKA?

Forest Health

Root rot, mistletoe and fir bark beetle are common in parts of WFN’s community forest. These reduce wood quality, may kill mature trees, and can increase fire risk. Areas of root rot, mistletoe or fir bark beetle are usually also areas of good quality bird habitat. So, activities aimed at improving forest health are not always consistent with best practices for managing bird habitat. By keeping the size of its harvested openings to about three hectares (7.5 acres) or less, Ntityix intends to reduce impact on bird habitat while also aiming to improve forest health.

Timing of Forest Operations

The least risk approach to avoiding harm and incidental take of birds or nests is to schedule forest operations outside the period when birds are typically nesting. As a first principle, Ntityix will seek to schedule its harvesting and other vegetation disturbing activities to avoid the nesting period. However, some situations may require operations to proceed during the bird nesting period. If so, Ntityix will consider alternative strategies to reduce the risk to nesting birds.

Fire Risk

The communities of West Kelowna and Peachland are adjacent to WFN’s community forest. The risk of devastating fire in these communities can be high. Wildfire risk reduction is a high priority to Ntityix in its activities near developed areas. Forestry activities that reduce fire risk may harm bird habitat. Ntityix will seek to schedule its activities outside the bird nesting period and will retain patches of high-quality bird habitat when managing for fire risk.

Recreation

The community forest is an important all-season recreational area. People disturb wildlife and frequent disturbance can prevent wildlife from using important habitats. Ntityix will strive to maintain great bird habitat through its forestry activities but frequent human use may reduce the habitat’s value to birds. Ntityix does not manage recreational activities but will manage its roads and trails to minimize human use to protect quiet spaces in the right places for birds.

Our mission is to manage the forest tenures held by Westbank First Nation on the basis of sustainability and the interwoven values of the land while maximizing benefits to Westbank First Nation through revenue and community opportunities.



Harvest. Growth. Protect.