

Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*)

Conservation Status Rank Summary

January 9, 2025

For details on assessment and ranking methodology, see: [Conservation Status Assessment Definitions, Process, Rank Factors, and Calculation of State Ranks for Montana Species](#)

Rarity and Trends

Rank Factor	Date Assessed	Value	Score	Data Source	Comments
Rarity					
Range Extent	2024-11-05	Y: 320724.0 km ²	4.710	MTNHP Range Maps	None
Area of Occupancy	2024-11-05	22031 4km ² cells	5.500	MTNHP Modeling	None
Number of Occurrences	2024-11-05	3969	5.500	MTNHP Databases	None
Population Size			-		Factor not used in ranking.
# of Occurrences in Good Condition	2024-11-05		2.200	MTNHP data	only 4 locations with "B" records are outside of Whitebark Pine range
% of Area Occupied in Good Condition			-		Factor not used in ranking.
Environmental Specificity	2008-09-15	Narrow	-	MTNHP Species Rank Data Table	Factor not used in ranking. Obligated to eating pine seeds. Methodology: NS (2003) Original Score: B
Rarity is calculated by averaging weighted factor scores: $((4.71 \times 1) + (5.50 \times 2) + (5.50 \times 1) + (2.20 \times 2)) / 6 = 4.27$					
Trends					
Short-term Trend	2023-12-20	[-9.6, -4.0%]	[-0.070, 0.000]	IMBCR	IMBCR trend in population estimates for Montana. "- 95% CI"
Long-term Trend	2025-01-09		-0.140		None
Trends score is calculated by summing weighted short and long-term trend scores: $((-0.07, 0.00) \times 2) + (-0.14 \times 1) = [-0.28, -0.14]$					

Threats

Rank Factor	Date Assessed	Value	Score	Data Source	Comments
Threats					
Overall Threat Impact		Very high	0.000		Disease threat to whitebark pine and other conifers, fire, climate change
Intrinsic Vulnerability	2008-09-15	Not intrinsically vulnerable	-	MTNHP Species Rank Data Table	Factor not used in ranking. Methodology: NS (2003) Original Score: C
Threat score is calculated from Overall Threat Impact when available or Intrinsic Vulnerability if not: (0.00) = 0.00					

Individual Threats Data

Threat Category	Date Assessed	Impact Score	Scope	Severity	Immediacy	Comments
Natural System Modifications	2024-11-05	Medium	Pervasive	Moderate	High	Fire suppression leading to poor forest health and high severity fires reducing stands of mature conifers. Severity poorly characterized
Invasive & Other Problematic Species, Genes & Diseases	2024-11-05	High	Pervasive	Serious	High	Loss of Whitebark Pine due to the pathogenic White Pine Blister Rust Fungus and a decrease in food resources for Nutcrackers.
Climate Change & Severe Weather	2025-01-09	Medium	Pervasive	Moderate	Moderate	Audubon's Survival by Degrees Project predicts a moderate loss of habitat in Montana with 1.5 C warming
Threat Tally: 0 - Very High, 1 - High, 2 - Medium, 0 - Low Overall Threat Impact* = Very high						

*See [Conservation Status Assessment Definitions, Process, Rank Factors, and Calculation of State Ranks for Montana Species](#) for calculation of Overall Threat Impact based on the number and impact of individual threats.

Conservation Status Rank Calculation

Raw score

Rarity: $(4.27 \times 70\%)$ + Threats: $(0.00 \times 30\%)$ + Trends: $([-0.28, -0.14]) = [2.71, 2.85]$

Calculated Rank: S3

Accepted Rank	S3
Date Approved	2008-10-01
Approval Authority	Montana Species of Concern Committee
Rank Justification	Species is common to uncommon within montane conifer forests, primarily in subalpine ecosystems. It appears to be undergoing minor declines but is facing significant threats due to loss of food resources due to declines in Whitebark Pines and from fire and fire suppression. Moderate increases in average temperature are predicted to result in moderate habitat loss for the species.

Supplementary Information

Montana Natural Heritage Program. 2021. Conservation Status Assessment Definitions, Process, Rank Factors, and Calculation of State Ranks for Montana Species. 18 p.

https://mtnhp.mt.gov/docs/Montana_State_Rank_Criteria_20211201.pdf

Montana Field Guide Species Account:

<https://fieldguide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=ABPAV08010>

Predicted Suitable Habitat Model:

<https://mtnhp.mt.gov/resources/models/?elcode=ABPAV08010>

Information Needs

Information needs are assessed by considering the availability of factors used to assess species status as well as the quality of these assessments. Current information availability and quality to inform Conservation Status Rank for this species are highlighted.

Rank Factor	Assessment Category	Value	Criteria
General Status	Status Quality	Adequate	Calculated rank has low uncertainty and is represented by a single rank (e.g. S3); accepted rank may be adjusted to a range rank (e.g. S2S3)
		Poor	Rank assessed as SU or calculated rank has notable uncertainty and corresponds to a range rank with 2 or more values (e.g. S2?, S1S3, or S4S5)
Rarity	Range Quality	Adequate	Range polygon adequately represents area of probable occupancy and does not include substantial unoccupied areas; range may be adequately defined and still include areas of unsuitable habitat (e.g. mountain ranges for plains species)
		Marginal	Range polygon defined, but may include or exclude notable areas where the species may or may not occur on the landscape
		Poor	Range polygon not defined
	Habitat Quality	Adequate	Species-habitat relationship is well-defined (e.g. relevant literature or robust habitat model available)
		Marginal	Understanding of species-habitat relationship is adequate among some but not all habitats (e.g. literature covers similar habitats outside of Montana or habitat model performance is only somewhat adequate)
		Poor	Species-habitat relationship is not well understood
Threats	Threat Quality	Adequate	Threat Impact is a single value (including "Unthreatened")
		Marginal	Threat Impact assessed at more than one value (e.g. "High - Medium")
		Poor	Threat Impact is Unknown but Intrinsic Vulnerability is assessed
		Unknown	Threat Impact is Unknown and Intrinsic Vulnerability is not assessed
Trends	Recency	Current	Short-term Trend assessment date less than 10 years old
		Out of Date but Adequate	Short-term Trend assessment date is more than 10 years old or Unknown, but species is Unthreatened
		Out of Date	Short-term Trend assessment date more than 10 years old
		Not Available	Short-term Trend data are not available
	Trend Quality	Sufficient	Short-term Trend assessed at a single value or multiple values with a minimum trend greater than -10% (stable or increasing)
		Unknown but Sufficient	Short-term Trend is Unknown, but species is Unthreatened
		Poor	Short-term Trend is less than -10% (in decline) with two or more values selected
		Unknown	Short-term Trend is Unknown

Summary of Information Availability

Data to assess this species are available and generally of sufficient quality.

Summary of Information Needs

There is some uncertainty in the threats assessment and given the high threats score, further research on broad impacts to the species would improve this assessment.

Additional Threat Details

The table below contains the complete threats assessment for this species. While the Conservation Status Rank Calculation is based on cumulative, broadly categorized (Level 1) threats data, threats are assessed and tracked for more specifically categorized (Level 2) threats when available.

Threat Category	Date Assessed	Assessed By	Data Source	Scope	Severity	Immediacy	Comments
Natural System Modifications - 7.1 - Fire & Fire Suppression	2024-11-05	Dan Bachen	Ray et al. 2020	Pervasive	Moderate	High	Fire suppression leading to poor forest health and high severity fires reducing stands of mature conifers. Severity poorly characterized
Invasive & Other Problematic Species, Genes & Diseases - 8.1 - Invasive Non-Native/Alien Species/Diseases	2024-11-05	Dan Bachen	Barringer et al. 2012	Pervasive	Serious	High	Loss of Whitebark Pine due to the pathogenic White Pine Blister Rust Fungus and a decrease in food resources for Nutcrackers.
Climate Change & Severe Weather - 11.1 - Habitat Shifting & Alteration	2025-01-09	Dan Bachen	Audubon Survival By Degrees	Pervasive	Moderate	Moderate	Audubon's Survival by Degrees Project predicts a moderate loss of habitat in Montana with 1.5 C warming