

Williamson's Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*)

Conservation Status Rank Summary

March 26, 2026

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	2025-06-11	S: 161199.9 km ²	3.930	MTNHP Range Maps	None
Area of Occupancy	2025-06-11	12901 4km ² cells	5.500	MTNHP Modeling	None
Number of Occurrences			-		Factor not used in ranking.
Population Size			-		Factor not used in ranking.
# of Occurrences in Good Condition			-		Factor not used in ranking.
% of Area Occupied in Good Condition			-		Factor not used in ranking.
Environmental Specificity	2009-01-21	Moderate	-	MTNHP Species Rank Data Table	Factor not used in ranking. Uses a broad variety of disturbed conifer and mixed conifer forests. Methodology: NS (2003) Original Score: C
Rarity is calculated by averaging weighted factor scores: $((3.93 \times 1) + (5.50 \times 2)) / 3 = 4.98$					
Trends					
Short-term Trend	2023-12-20	4.9%	0.000	IMBCR	IMBCR trend in population estimates for Montana. "-Point Estimate"
Long-term Trend			-		Factor not used in ranking.
Trends score is calculated by summing weighted short and long-term trend scores: $((0.00 \times 2)) = 0.00$					

Threats

Rank Factor	Date Assessed	Value	Score	Data Source	Comments
Threats					
Overall Threat Impact		High	1.830		No major threat identified, but decline in conifer forest due to fire, beetle kill, and selected timber harvest or thinning probably represent a threat to some extent. Need to have groups of large snags and sap trees intact on the landscape.
Intrinsic Vulnerability	2009-01-21	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: (1.83) = 1.83					

Individual Threats Data

Threat Category	Date Assessed	Impact Score	Scope	Severity	Immediacy	Comments
Residential & Commercial Development	2026-03-26	Low	Restricted	Slight	High	Removal of injured, dead, and dying large-diameter trees on private properties in river bottoms and in forested areas removes important nest trees and foraging resources.
Biological Resource Use	2026-03-26	Low	Restricted	Moderate	High	Timber harvest in mature and old-growth forests can remove large-diameter trees and canopy closure this species needs for nest sites as well as snags and downed woody debris needed for foraging.
Natural System Modifications	2025-06-11	Medium	Large	Moderate	High	Species may be impacted by fire suppression and impacts to fire severity as a result of historic and ongoing suppression efforts. Severe and stand-replacing fires uncharacteristic of forest types where this species nests results in loss of mature and old growth forests and associated important habitat features (i.e., snags, large woody debris, and injured or dying trees). Lack of fire-related disturbance exacerbates the effects of abnormally severe fires by leaving valley-bottom forests vulnerable to fires outside the normal range of variation for the forest type.
Climate Change & Severe Weather	2026-03-26	Medium	Large	Moderate	Moderate	Reduced snowpack and spring/summer precipitation leads to diminished flows which lead to less water available within stream systems to cause erosion and deposition that

						leads to recruitment of cottonwoods used for nesting and foraging.
Threat Tally: 0 - Very High, 0 - High, 2 - Medium, 2 - Low Overall Threat Impact* = 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: $(4.98 \times 70\%)$ + Threats: $(1.83 \times 30\%)$ + Trends: $(0.00) = 4.03$

Calculated Rank: S4

Accepted Rank	S4B
Date Approved	Date Unknown
Approval Authority	Legacy Assessment: MTNHP Staff
Rank Justification	Species is apparently secure and not at risk of extirpation. It faces threats from forest management and habitat shifting from warming temperatures.

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=ABNYF05030>

Predicted Suitable Habitat Model:

<https://mtnhp.mt.gov/resources/models/?elcode=ABNYF05030>

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

All information to assess rank are available

Summary of Information Needs

No additional information are needed

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
Residential & Commercial Development - 1.1 - Housing & Urban Areas	2026-03-26	Dan Bachen	SWAP Assessment	Restricted	Slight	High	Removal of injured, dead, and dying large-diameter trees on private properties in river bottoms and in forested areas removes important nest trees and foraging resources.
Transportation & Service Corridors - 4.1 - Roads & Railroads	2026-03-26	Dan Bachen	SWAP Assessment	Restricted	Negligible	High	Roads used to access forested areas can increase snag and snag recruit removal due to firewood cutting.
Biological Resource Use - 5.3 - Logging & Wood Harvesting	2026-03-26	Dan Bachen	SWAP Assessment	Restricted	Moderate	High	Timber harvest in mature and old-growth forests can remove large-diameter trees and canopy closure this species needs for nest sites as well as snags and downed woody debris needed for foraging.
Natural System Modifications - 7.1 - Fire & Fire Suppression	2025-06-11	Dan Bachen	Expert Opinion	Large	Moderate	High	<p>Species may be impacted by fire suppression and impacts to fire severity as a result of historic and ongoing suppression efforts. Severe and stand-replacing fires uncharacteristic of forest types where this species nests results in loss of mature and old growth forests and associated important habitat features (i.e., snags, large woody debris, and injured or dying trees).</p> <p>Lack of fire-related disturbance exacerbates the effects of abnormally severe fires by leaving valley-bottom forests vulnerable to fires outside the normal range of variation for the forest type.</p>
Climate Change & Severe Weather - 11.2 - Droughts	2026-03-26	Dan Bachen	SWAP Assessment	Large	Moderate	Moderate	Reduced snowpack and spring/summer precipitation leads to diminished flows which lead to less water available within stream systems to cause erosion and deposition that leads to recruitment of cottonwoods used for nesting and foraging.