



Objectives:

1. To address the discovery and response to raptor-sized nest residences regardless of occupancy status or suspected species, given the current absence of provincial government policy.
2. To avoid operation activity stressors on possible nesting species (where nests become occupied).
3. To provide for adequate tree-to-tree perch opportunity for fledglings developing flight-skills during the home-proximity fidelity period before post-natal dispersal occurs in late summer.

NOTE:

- Applicable to all forest harvesting operations regardless of operating season.
- Applicable to operations on Crown land and Private land.

Preservation of discovered nest locations is the desired goal; however, DMI acknowledges that some nests may miss detection (i.e. unknown nest-locations during night operations). Nevertheless, deliberate felling of discovered nests (occupied or unoccupied), is **unacceptable**, regardless of land ownership.

Background:

Legislation, corporate stewardship and professional ethics, collectively demand that mitigation strategies be employed to limit the impacts of forest operations on both **protected** and **non-protected** bird species. Legislation around **protected species** generally prohibit impacts to nesting birds and their residences during the nesting and rearing period (Migratory Birds Act, Species at Risk, Wildlife Act/Regulation), but in some cases also imply protection of the nest residence regardless of occupancy. The negligent disruption of **non-protected** species during the active nesting season represents a risk to corporate stewardship reputation and is of questionable ethical and professional performance.

DMI recognizes the significant local avifauna species diversity, and the annual temporal fluctuations in populations present within its geographic sphere of interest. The company has conducted an evaluation of the habitat associations, nesting locations (i.e. canopy position), and general season of presence for those bird species documented to occur in northern Alberta. Approximately 136 species of avifauna are associated with three distinct, broad vegetation areas or upland forest habitat-types that form DMI's primary areas of operation (deciduous dominant stands, mixed wood stands and fringe-agricultural area stands). The largest portion of these 136 species actively nests between the 3rd week of April and mid-July. During this time, felling activities are temporarily halted.

The remainder of forest bird species are present year-round or only outside the spring/summer season. With regard to wetland proximity species, the application of existing ground rules and riparian buffering normally assist in addressing potential impacts to these as well other biota associated with riparian areas.

For a number of years DMI has employed a practice of noting significant-visibility wildlife residence features as they are discovered and observed during advance field assessment and site-planning fieldwork. This has included **visibly "large nests" of high-canopy position** that are often unoccupied at the time of discovery. The size of such nests renders them suitable nesting structures for some of the approximately 20 species of raptors present in northern Alberta. Given that some raptor species practice opportunistic use of vacant nests¹ or multiple-year fidelity to the same nest, DMI recognizes the unique value in preserving such discoveries. Furthermore, the company recognizes that a number of those "potential resident" species are protected or of special concern status.

Since 1997, DMI has protected raptor-sized nest discoveries through incorporation of nests into internal block retention patches, or establishing a 30-meter radial buffer² to the nest tree (circular retention patch). Larger buffers, (up to 60-meter radius), have voluntarily been employed where **active** nest occupancy is suspected. Unanticipated large nests discovered during harvest activities have also been

¹ DMI conducted an informal 'observational survey' of local historical private land sites where raptor nest retention was incorporated into the operating plan design. The project (summer, 2005) confirmed that nest re-use is occurring regionally by various raptor species. Preservation of unoccupied nests is therefore a valid strategy.

² Currently no ground rules exist in the province to define or prescribe this requirement. It has been implemented on a voluntary basis as a company initiative. The radial distance was developed by a former company habitat-specialist. A literature review indicates wide variability in other Canadian jurisdictions where formal guidelines exist. Consultation with federal and provincial government biologists confirms that in the absence of current guidelines, this practice is viewed as a pro-active measure of corporate due diligence.





preserved 'operationally' utilizing a similar method. Buffering practices have voluntarily included private land timber properties in circumstances where the company directs the harvesting operation. In those cases, the landholder is involved in the decision to protect such values through their involvement in the development of the detailed operating plan. Historically, most landholders share the concern for these unique wildlife site values and are quite cooperative in their preservation.

ACTION	VERIFICATION / NOTES
Nests Discovered During Planning Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPS (nest) location and indicate occupancy evidence. • Discovered nests are flagged/buffered a minimum nest-to-harvest area distance of 30m radius. • Where possible, buffer is incorporated into 'retention' design strategies and watershed buffering (minimum 30m radius). • Nest discovered in close proximity to but outside of the block boundary should be protected. The block boundary should be adjusted to maintain minimum 30 m buffer from the nest to the boundary (location also GPS'd). • Road locations should avoid proximity to buffer.
Nests Identified on Plans - Operations Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow planned prescriptions and flagged buffers.
<p>Unanticipated Nest Discovery During Operations</p> <p><i>Deliberate Felling of Discovered Nests During any Season of Operability is Unacceptable.</i></p>	<p>Summer Operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nests Discovered <u>during Summer Operations</u> MUST be reported to a Forest Resources Supervisor. • The Biodiversity Stewardship Coordinator will guide in the assessing the nest for occupancy (nest residence activity, tree base scat evidence), and will determine the appropriate course of action when nest is occupied (in consultation with external expertise). • Where clearly occupied and a Forest Resources Supervisor is not readily available, felling operations should be relocated to another area. <p>For all Operating Seasons (Summer/Winter/Fall):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate unanticipated nests into operator-selected retention patches where possible (preferably at a minimum nest-to-harvest area distance of 30m radius). • If not detected early enough by operator, the nest should be preserved as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of small patch retention (preferred). <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single stem retention (minimally).

REVISION HISTORY

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APPROVAL:

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