

WiTS Williamson's Sapsucker Okanagan Falls Benchmark Nest Monitoring 2013

Les Gyug, 24 June 2013

This brief report summarizes the WiTS monitoring of nest trees in the benchmark Williamson's Sapsucker area east of Okanagan Falls. Nest trees on this site had been previously monitored by WiTS from 2008 to 2010.

In 2013, Les Gyug (WiTS volunteer) and Christoph Mayer (WiTS staff) censused the site for Williamson's Sapsucker nests on June 21, 2013. All 13 old nest trees for which we had exact locations were checked for occupancy, and the remainder of the areas surveyed for current nesting. The two surveyors spent 8.25 hours on site (6:15 AM to 2:30 PM). Total volunteer time in 2013 was 12 hours in the field and 2 hours in preparation and reporting. Total volunteer vehicle travel on June 21, 2013, was 181 km.

Only one of the 13 old nest trees (WN051) was found to be occupied in 2013 (Figure 1). Nest tree WN239 has broken off midway up the trunk at the cavity location and is probably no longer suitable for nesting (had been previously recorded). Nest tree WNK015 was cut down for no apparent reason and left on site (i.e. not removed for firewood) in or about 2010 (had been previously recorded).

Three new nest trees were found to be active in 2013 (Table 1). Only one Williamson's Sapsucker was detected anywhere on the site that could not be directly associated with any nest. However, the site where it responded to a call-playback was thoroughly searched with no results, so it was concluded that this bird was from one of the active nest sites on a longer-distance foraging trip.

Baseline data for this area was summarized in Gyug et al. (2007) from surveys funded by the Ministry of Environment. The census area was 67% old-growth Western Larch forest in 2003 (Gyug et al. 2007). Since first censused in 2003, about 60 ha of old-growth forest was harvested in 2005-2006, leaving only about 39% of the site in old-growth forest.

Since first surveyed, and particularly after the timber harvesting of 2005-2006, the nest density has decreased. Total nest density including confirmed and probable nests average 3.11 nests/km² in 2003-2004, but averaged less than half of that (1.39 nests/km²) from 2008-2013.

Reference:

Gyug, L.W., I.P. Ohanjanian, C. Steeger, I.A. Manley, and P.W. Davidson. 2007. Distribution and density of Williamson's Sapsucker in British Columbia, Canada. *British Columbia Birds* 16: 2-15.

Table 1. New Williamson's Sapsucker nest trees found in the Okanagan Falls benchmark census site, 2013.

Nest ID	UTM Zone	UTM Easting	UTM Northing	Tree Sp.	Wildlife Tree Class	DBH (cm)	Tree Ht. (m)	Nest Ht. (m)	Comments
WNK038	11	324443	5463987	Lw	2	52	32	12	Decay only evident by cavities, fire scarring at base does not appear to have breached the bark
WNK039	11	324292	5464410	Lw	2	74	37	20	Dead Top, Fire Scar at base
WNK040	11	324111	5465616	Lw	2	67	29	13	Broken Top, Cake Fork leaders

Table 2. Williamson's Sapsucker nest densities in the Okanagan Falls benchmark census site, 2003-2013. Total nest density includes confirmed and probable nests.

Year	Area Censused (km ²)	Number of Active Nests	Number of Pairs (Probable nests)	Confirmed Nest Density	Total Nest Density
2003	2.26	6	1	2.71	3.17
2004	2.95	7	2	2.37	3.05
2006	2.34	6	0	2.56	2.56
2008	2.34	5	0	2.15	2.15
2009	2.34	2	0	0.85	0.85
2010	2.34	2	0	0.85	0.85
2013	2.34	4	0	1.71	1.71

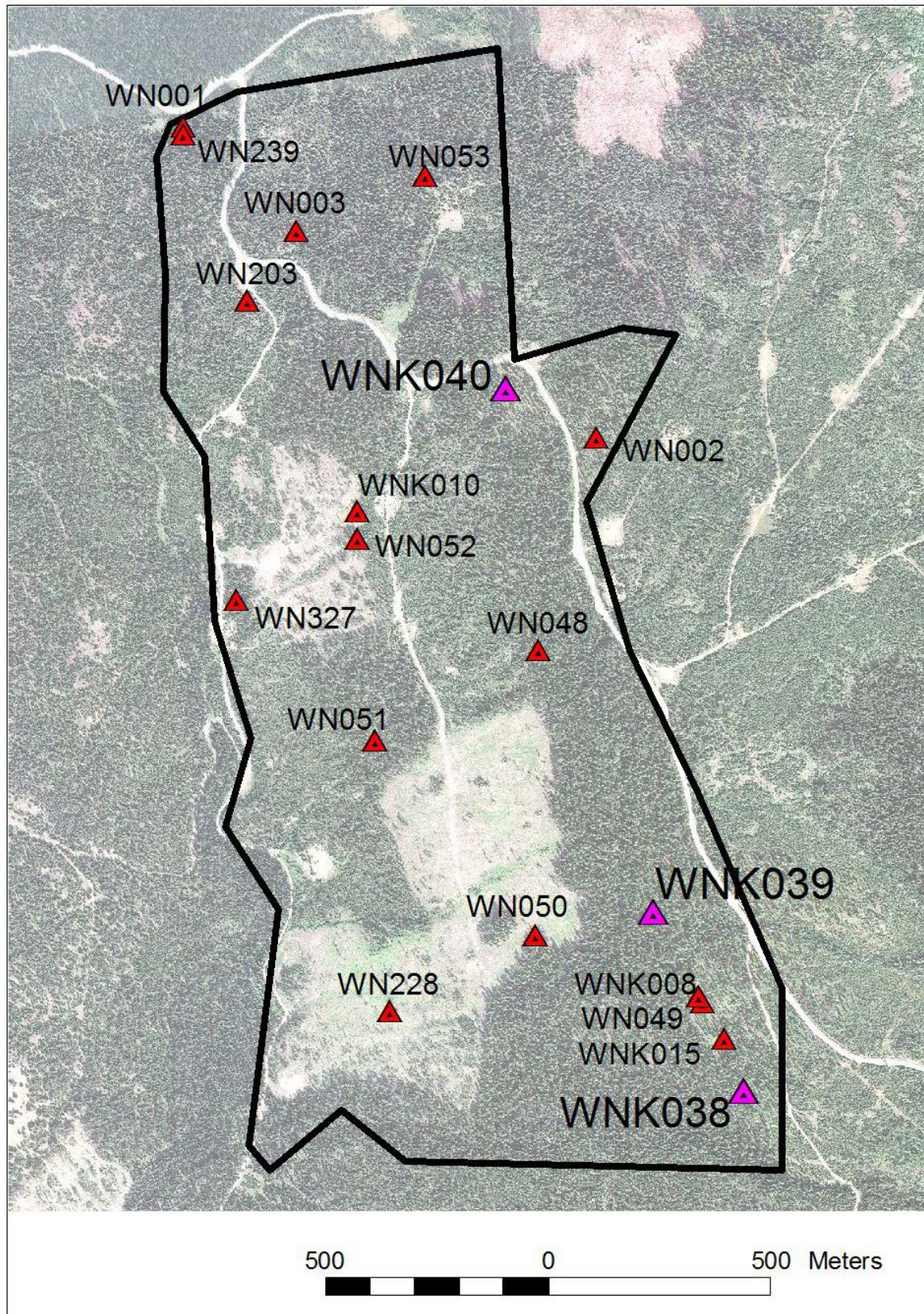


Figure 1. Williamson's Sapsucker Okanagan Falls benchmark census area, 2013.