

SPECIES: Scientific [common]	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i> [Lewis's Woodpecker]
Forest:	Bridger-Teton National Forest
Forest Reviewer:	Randall Griebel, James Wilder
Date of Review:	07/12/2018; reviewed 5/19/2025
Forest concurrence (or recommendation if new) for inclusion of species on list of potential SCC: (Enter Yes or No)	NO

FOREST REVIEW RESULTS:

1. The Forest concurs or recommends the species for inclusion on the list of potential SCC:
Yes ___ No X
2. Rationale for not concurring is based on (check all that apply):
Species is not native to the plan area _____
Species is not known to occur in the plan area _____
Species persistence in the plan area is not of substantial concern X

FOREST REVIEW INFORMATION:

1. Is the Species Native to the Plan Area? Yes X No ___

If no, provide explanation and stop assessment.
2. Is the Species Known to Occur within the Planning Area? Yes X No ___

If no, stop assessment.

Table 1. All Known Occurrences, Years, and Frequency within the Planning Area

Year Observed	Number of Individuals	Location of Observations	Source of Information
NA	0	Greys River Ranger District	Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (July 2018)
1987	2	Kemmerer Ranger District	Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (July 2018)
NA	0	Pinedale Ranger District	Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (July 2018)
NA	0	Big Piney Ranger District	Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (July 2018)
NA	0	Blackrock Ranger District	Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (July 2018)
1986	2	Jackson Ranger District	Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (July 2018)
1991-2011	3		

a. Are all Species Occurrences Only Accidental or Transient?

Yes ___ No ___ Unk_ X_

If yes, document source for determination and stop assessment.

b. For species with known occurrences on the Forest since 1990, based on the number of observations and/or year of last observation, can the species be presumed to be established or becoming established in the plan area?

Yes ___ No ___ Unk_ X_

If no, provide explanation and stop assessment.

c. For species with known occurrences on the Forest predating 1990, does the weight of evidence suggest the species still occurs in the plan area?

Yes_ X_ No ___

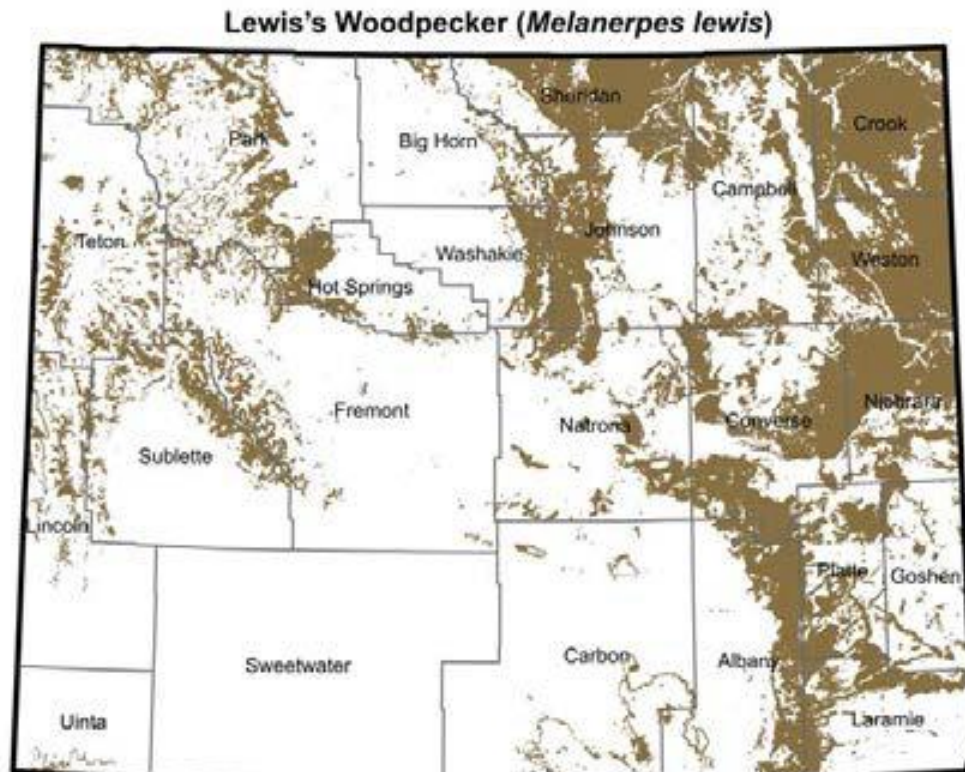
If no, provide explanation and stop assessment.

d. **Map 1**, Lewis's woodpecker range map of North America



Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Lewis's woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*).

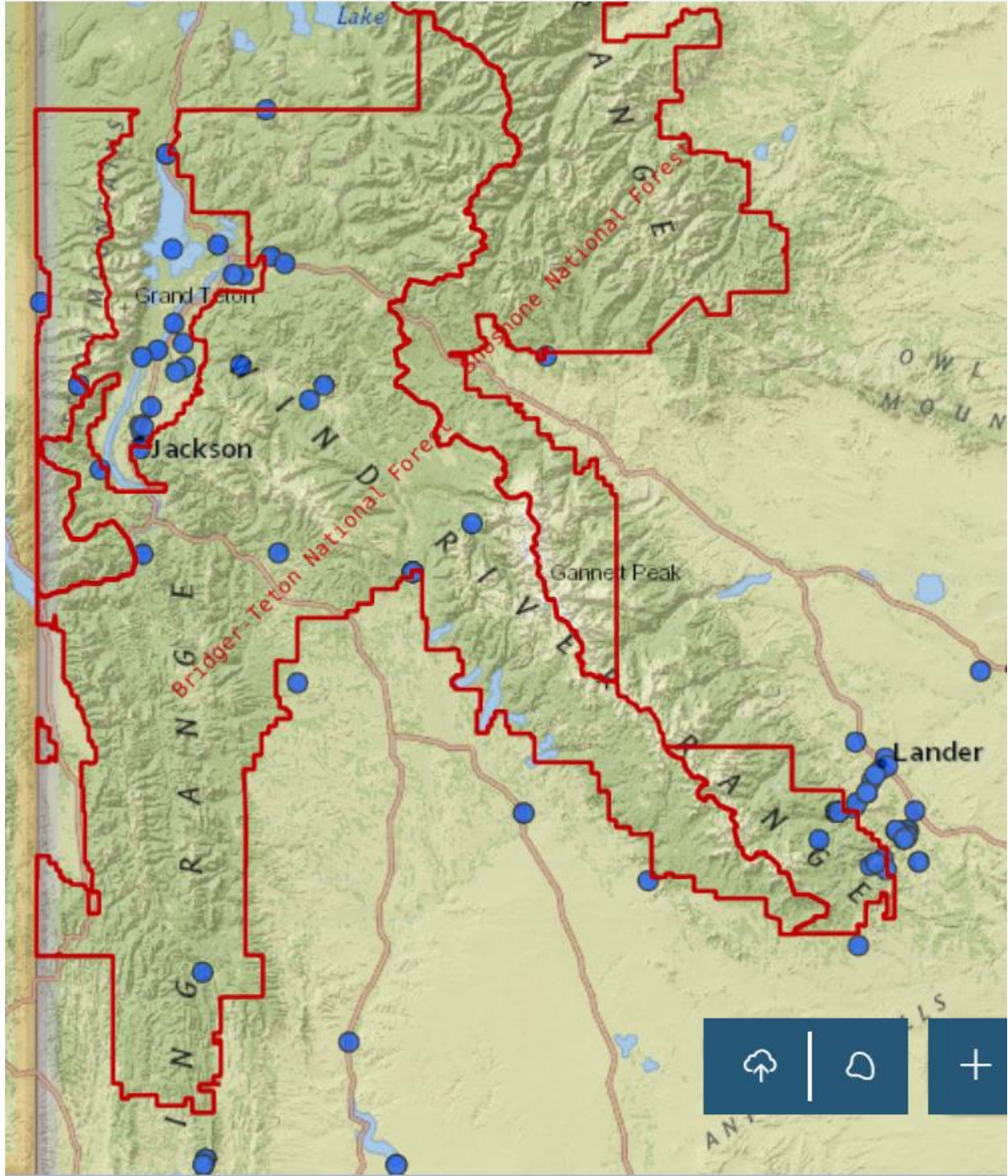
e. **Map 2**, Range and predicted distribution of *Melanerpes lewis* in Wyoming.



SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Sept. 2016. Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Lewis's woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*).

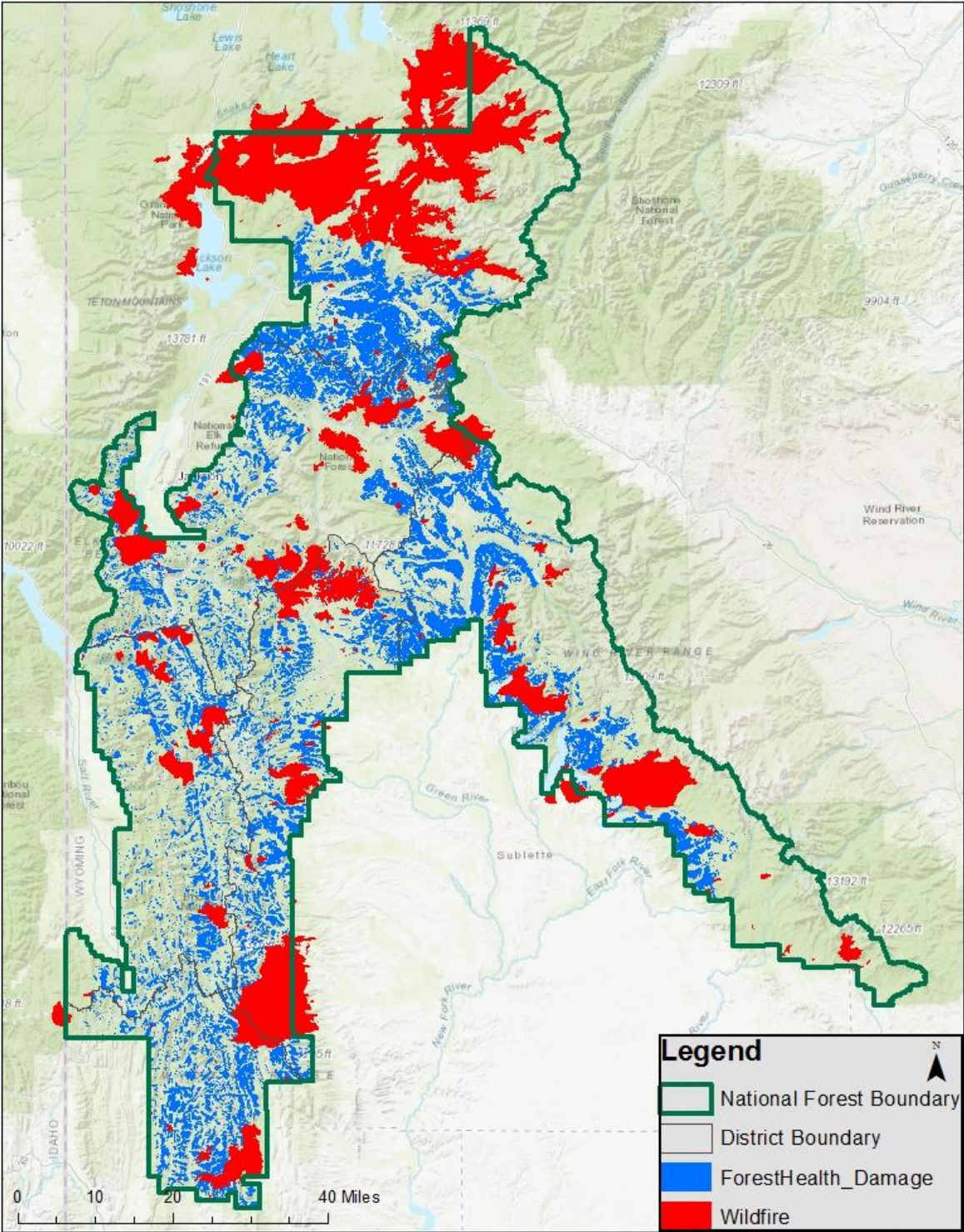
- f. **Map 3**, Map of Lewis's woodpecker occurrences on the Bridger-Teton National Forest (Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, [May 2025]).



- g. **Map 4**, Areas on the forest with snag habitat. Includes all historical to present wildfires and forested areas damaged by insects, disease, abiotic factors, multiple factors and unknown reasons. It is important to note that in most cases of damage there are also live, green trees

intermixed within the polygons. Additionally, most wildfire polygons have areas of live trees that did not burn intermixed within the polygons.

Snag Habitat



3. Is There Substantial Concern for the Species' Capability to persist Over the Long-term in the Plan Area Based on Best Available Scientific Information?

Table 2. Status summary based on existing conservation assessments

Entity	Status/Rank (include definition if Other)
NatureServe Global Status	<p>G4— Apparently Secure</p> <p><i>Uncommon but not rare; some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors.</i></p>
NatureServe State Status	<p>S3— Vulnerable</p> <p><i>At moderate risk of extinction due to a restricted range, relatively few populations (often 80 or fewer), recent and widespread declines, or other factors.</i></p>
WGFD	<p>NSSU (U), Tier II</p> <p><i><u>Population Status:</u> Unknown; Necessary information is lacking, Unknown status until information is obtained.</i></p> <p><i><u>Limiting Factors:</u> Necessary information is lacking, Unknown status until information is obtained.</i></p> <p><i><u>Tier II:</u> Moderate priority</i></p> <p><i>[The WGFD's Species of Greater Conservation Need (SGCN) designation process is based upon its Native Species Status (NSS) classification system that compares population and limiting factor variables using a 16 cell matrix. As a species moves from a placement closest to the upper left corner of the matrix (Aa/NSS1) toward the lower right corner (Dd/NSS7) the species' population status in Wyoming is considered more secure. Numerical scores were assigned to each of these variables and summed to provide a total score (i.e. NSS3). SGCN were placed into one of three tiers based on their total score: Tier I – highest priority, Tier II – moderate priority, and Tier III – lowest priority.]</i></p> <p><i>(WGFD - Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need)</i></p>
WYNDD	<p>Species of Concern</p> <p><i>Species vulnerable to extirpation at the global or state level due to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. their rarity (e.g., restricted distribution, small population size, low population density)</i> <i>b. inherent vulnerability (e.g., specialized habitat requirements, restrictive life history)</i> <i>c. threats (e.g., significant loss of habitat, sensitivity to disturbances)</i> <p><i>(Wyoming Natural Diversity Database - Species of Concern)</i></p>
USDA Forest Service	Region 4: No Special Status

UDI FWS	<p>Species of Conservation Concern; Migratory Bird</p> <p><i>Species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The overall goal of the Birds of Conservation Concern is to accurately identify the migratory and non-migratory bird species (beyond those already designated as Federally threatened or endangered) that represent our highest conservation priorities.</i></p> <p>(USFWS-Birds of Conservation Concern [www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/birds-of-conservation-concern.php])</p>
WY BLM	No Special Status
IUCN	<p>LC – Least Concern</p> <p><i>A taxon is Least Concern when it has been evaluated against the criteria and does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable or Near Threatened. Widespread and abundant taxa are included in this category.</i></p> <p>(IUCN – Red List Categories and Criteria)</p>
Partners in Flight (PIF) Continental Concern Score	13

Table 3. Status summary based on best available scientific information.

Species (Scientific and Common Name): <i>Melanerpes lewis</i> [Lewis's woodpecker]		
Criteria	Rationale	Literature Citations
Distribution on Bridger-Teton National Forest	Lewis's woodpecker distribution closely matches that of ponderosa pine in the western United States (Abele 2004) with breeding habitat overlapping the state of Wyoming (Map 1). However, species distribution throughout the state, including the Bridger-Teton National Forest, is extremely patchy within suitable habitat (Map 2). Lewis's woodpecker populations in Wyoming are migrant and the species does not winter in the state (WGFD 2017). The species is not well distributed throughout the BTNF, and has been documented on 5 of the 6 ranger districts (Map 3).	<p>Abele, S.C., V.A. Saab, and E.O. Garton. (2004). Lewis's Woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>): a technical conservation assessment. USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region.</p> <p>Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Lewis's woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>).</p>

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Abundance on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	In Wyoming, the Lewis's woodpecker has an abundance rank of <i>rare</i> and appears to be uncommon throughout its suitable habitat (WGFD 2017). According to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, from 1968–2015, annual Wyoming BBS detections of Lewis's Woodpecker ranged from 0 to 13 (average = 1), with none recorded in 2015. A total of 13 Lewis's woodpeckers were detected statewide during surveys for the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) program between 2009 to 2015 (WGFD 2017). IMBCR data for the BTNF indicates zero observations from 2010-2024 on 20+ survey plots visited per year (Shivik 2025). Lewis's woodpecker abundance on the BTNF is unknown. However, the low number of occurrence records suggest the species is uncommon on the BTNF (Table 1). There has been a total of 12 Lewis's woodpecker observations on the Forest since 1980.	<p>Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. (2017) The Rocky Mountain Avian Data Center [web application], Brighton, CO. http://www.rmbo.org.</p> <p>Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Lewis's woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>).</p> <p>Shivik, J. A. 2025. 2025 Intermountain Region Broad-Scale Bird Monitoring Report, draft. 76 pp.</p>
Population Trend on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	Wyoming trend data from the North American BBS suggest that Lewis's woodpecker experienced a long-term (1966–2015) decline of 1.61% and short-term (2005–2015) decline of 1.12% annually (Sauer et al 2017). However, both of these state estimates are statistically insignificant and include a very low sample size. Current estimates of abundance and population trends in Wyoming may not be accurate, and more data are needed (WGFD 2017). Additionally, the annual completion report does not conclude any robust population density estimations for the state of Wyoming (Orabona 2017); there are no population trend estimates for the BTNF.	<p>Orabona, A. C. 2017. Threatened, Endangered, And Nongame Bird And Mammal Investigations. Wyoming Game and Fish Department Nongame Program Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management Section Wildlife Division. Annual Completion Report.</p> <p>Sauer, J. R., D. K. Niven, J. E. Hines, D. J. Ziolkowski, Jr, K. L. Pardieck, J. E. Fallon, and W. A. Link. 2017. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 - 2015. Version 2.07.2017 USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD.</p>
Habitat Trend on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	Lewis's woodpecker is commonly found in ponderosa pine forest, open riparian woodland dominated by cottonwood, and recently logged or burned pine forests (WGFD 2017). Dead or decaying nest trees are important habitat components for many breeding North American woodpeckers, such as Lewis's woodpecker (Vierling 1997). The soft wood of dead/decayed trees is critical for breeding activities because their skulls are not adapted to drilling into hard wood (Spring 1965 in Vierling 1997). Lewis's woodpeckers do not excavate for	<p>Abele, S.C., V.A. Saab, and E.O. Garton. (2004). Lewis's Woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>): a technical conservation assessment. USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region.</p> <p>Vierling, K. T. 1997. Habitat selection of Lewis's Woodpeckers in southeastern</p>

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	<p>wood-boring insects, as do most North American woodpecker species; instead, they prefer to catch insects while in flight (Abele 2004). Lewis's woodpeckers prefer habitat with dense, brushy understory and relatively open canopy, to facilitate insect abundance and foraging ability.</p> <p>Much of the species breeding habitat throughout Wyoming is outside the BTNF, east of the continental divide, with suitable habitat found most readily in the northeast and southeast portions of the state (Abele 2004). There is very little ponderosa pine and only about 0.01% (~399 acres) of the forest is considered cottonwood woodland habitat on the BTNF; primary Lewis's woodpecker habitat is located in the Black Hills in northeast Wyoming.</p> <p>Snag habitat is well distributed throughout the forest (Map 4) and recent large fires have not resulted in an influx of Lewis's woodpecker sightings. It appears that the lack of ponderosa pine and cottonwood habitat is influencing the species occupation of the forest as opposed to simply having snag habitat or not.</p>	<p>Colorado. Wilson Bulletin 109:121-130.</p> <p>Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Lewis's woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>).</p>
Threats to the Species and its Habitat on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	<p><u>Natural Threats</u></p> <p>Lewis's woodpecker have specific habitat components that contribute to their reproductive and foraging success. Limited nest-site availability is a significant limiting factor for Lewis's woodpecker (Abele 2004), requiring standing dead or partly dead trees that are in advanced stages of decay in order to excavate a nest cavity (WGFD 2017). Nesting habitat is appears to be well distributed across the forest (Map 4), whether that is the result of wildfire or forest health issues related to insects and disease. However, wildfire suppression efforts could result in less available habitat in the future.</p> <p>Competition from European starlings for nest cavities may contribute to a lack of nest success and pose a threat the species (WGFD 2017). Predation is also an ecological threat to Lewis's woodpeckers. Predation and pressure from American kestrels, various hawks, black bear, small mammals, ravens, and</p>	<p>Abele, S.C., V.A. Saab, and E.O. Garton. (2004). Lewis's Woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>): a technical conservation assessment. USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region.</p> <p>Vierling, K. T. 1997. Habitat selection of Lewis's Woodpeckers in southeastern Colorado. Wilson Bulletin 109:121-130.</p> <p>Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Lewis's woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>).</p>

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	<p>snakes has been documented (Abele 2004).</p> <p><u>Habitat Loss</u></p> <p>Habitat loss and degradation are one of the most significant threats to the species (WGFD 2017). Fire suppression, post-fire management activities, and alterations to riverine systems are considered major factors influencing population numbers (Abele 2004). Fire suppression—and the reduction of snags— is a potential threat to Lewis's woodpecker nesting habitat on the Forest. Habitat degradation from intensive livestock grazing and the reduction in dense understory vegetation and insect abundance is also known to reduce Lewis's woodpecker habitat (WGFD 2017, Vierling 1997). Reductions in understory vegetation due to grazing has resulted in a loss and degradation of riparian woodlands, and therefore altered nesting and foraging habitat (Abele 2004).</p> <p>Habitat loss has also occurred from human development encroaching into breeding habitat on open valley floors and foothills. Vierling (1997) found that Lewis's woodpecker nests did not occur near anthropogenic structures. This may have indirect effects to populations on the BTNF, where adjacent nesting habitat is impacted by human development.</p> <p><u>Climate Change</u></p> <p>Changes in climate including warming temperatures and broad-scale changes in precipitation patterns will likely increase the extent and severity of stand-replacing wildfires, disease outbreaks, and insect infestations on the BTNF. Larger, more frequent and intense fires will result in the predominance of younger forests. Increases in burn frequency, size, and severity is projected to decrease late seral forests on the landscape, which could decrease the availability of large trees and snags. Cottonwoods are somewhat fire tolerant owing to their thick bark and can resprout and survive low-intensity fires. Fire may help to regenerate cottonwood forest and fire injury can introduce diseases, which would promote rot and soft wood for cavity excavation,</p>	

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	although this would potentially affect only about 0.01% of the forest.	
<p>Summary and recommendations:</p> <p>Although nesting (large diameter snags) habitat is well distributed across the forest, the species distribution and abundance is almost non-existent. While the species appears to be rare and uncommon across its range, including the BTNF, the species is likely less abundant on the Forest due to the lack of cottonwood and open, ponderosa pine forest that it prefers. As occupancy records suggest, populations of Lewis woodpecker do not appear to be prevalent on the Forest and the few documented observations suggest those of transient individuals, rather than established populations.</p> <p>Considering the lack of established populations on the Forest and lack of desirable habitat (i.e., cottonwood and ponderosa pine habitat types), there is no substantial concern for the species' capability to persist over the long-term within the planning unit at this time. Therefore, it is recommended that the Lewis's woodpecker is not a Species of Conservation Concern for the Bridger-Teton National Forest.</p> <p>Evaluator(s): Ashley Egan, Randall Griebel</p>		Date: July 10, 2018