

Peer Review: Red tree vole nest site characteristics and persistence in young and old Douglas-fir forests: implications for canopy-dependent species

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Collaborators: Brigit Humphreys + 2 other reviewers

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Recommended Citation

Piasecki, J., J. Bailey, and K. Moriarty. 2026. Red tree vole nest site characteristics and persistence in young and old Douglas-fir forests: implications for canopy-dependent species. *Stacks Journal*: 26002. <https://doi.org/10.60102/stacks-26002>.

Accepted by 2 of 3 reviewers

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Publishing History


Submitted April 17 2025

Accepted January 20 2026

Published March 27 2026

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 Open Access

 Peer-Reviewed

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Reviewer Summaries

Nathan Hooven

Initial Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

no

What did the authors do a good job with?

The authors did a very thorough job of describing their methods, including survey techniques and measurements/characteristics collected for each nest found. I found the results to be on the whole complete and the supplementary material was helpful for reference. I also like the management implications section, and I think the authors do a good job of tying their story together here, emphasizing how young forests may provide more nesting habitat than previously appreciated for voles and other species. Additionally, I think the introduction section (and the manuscript as a whole) is well documented and provides sufficient citations for nearly all the authors' statements.

How do you think this research will contribute to the field?

This work will add to the body of knowledge on red tree vole ecology and survey techniques, emphasizing the potential of young forests as habitat to for this species and the strong relationship between nest characteristics and longevity. The addition of information on other species' use of nests is also a major highlight of this paper.

Regarding the study design and methods, what do the authors need to fix or improve upon to be fit for publication?

As pointed out by several reviewers, additional clarity in outlining the study design and some aspects of the methods could be useful. Examples include details on classification of old forest stands, and justification of contrasting nest survey methods in young and old forests.

Regarding the analysis and interpretation of their findings, what do the authors need to fix or improve upon to be fit for publication?

In line with other reviewers' comments, the interpretation of the "stand age" variable for the nest persistence model is probably not appropriate due to a very small effect size and lack of strong evidence for its inclusion via model selection. The authors should emphasize the nest size variable as its effect is much larger. Additionally, I was confused by the post-hoc natural logarithm model for nest size I think this requires more justification. While most of the figures depict useful information, I agree with other reviewers that several of them (5 and 6 especially) could be modified for additional clarity. Finally, the authors do not mention their generalized additive model approach in the methods but reference it in the results; this should be fixed.

Is there anything else you think the authors need to fix in their article to be fit for publication?

Several other reviewers pointed out many small typos, grammatical errors, and inconsistency in formatting throughout the paper. I concur with their edits, although I attempted to avoid "copyediting" as much as possible as I am not convinced this is the job of the peer reviewer – most of these edits are minor and should be easy to fix. Aside from that, some of the methods and results sections could easily be moved to supplementary material for the curious reader, (see mine and other reviewers' comments on



tables and figures throughout the manuscript, Table 2 and Figure 3 for example), but are probably not necessary for the main text.

Do you have any concerns about the ethics of this research?

I do not have any concerns about ethics here.

Do you believe the article, in its current form, is fit for publication?

This paper requires minor revisions but does not need further peer review

Revised Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

No

How well did the authors respond to your comments?

5/5

What - if any - feedback do you feel the authors did not adequately respond to?

None

Based on your review, what should happen next?

This paper is ready for publication

Would you like to be listed as a Collaborator on the final publication?

No, I do not want to be listed as a Collaborator

2nd Revised Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

No

How well did the authors respond to your comments?

5/5

What - if any - feedback do you feel the authors did not adequately respond to?

Based on your review, what should happen next?

This paper is ready for publication

Would you like to be listed as a Collaborator on the final publication?

No, I do not want to be listed as a Collaborator

Brigit Humphreys

Initial Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

no

What did the authors do a good job with?

The authors did a good job with being thorough in their field and analytical methods. This was clearly an impressive amount of work with large sample sizes encompassing a large geographical area that includes much of the red tree vole's range. In addition, they were able to answer their three objectives regarding nest characteristics, nest persistence, and nest use by canopy-dependent rodents.



How do you think this research will contribute to the field?

The authors collected, compiled, and analyzed a large amount of data, producing interesting results that will help inform future survey efforts and conservation strategies for arboreal species in this region.

Regarding the study design and methods, what do the authors need to fix or improve upon to be fit for publication?

I think the study design and methods were sound, justified, and described in detail to understand what was done.

Regarding the analysis and interpretation of their findings, what do the authors need to fix or improve upon to be fit for publication?

I believe that the analysis and interpretation of their findings were accurate and thorough. Increasing clarity in figures and tables would be helpful.

Is there anything else you think the authors need to fix in their article to be fit for publication?

While the majority of the manuscript is well-written, there are a large number of distracting typos and inconsistencies that need to be fixed. Overall, there did not seem to be a close attention to detail when it comes to the writing, figures, and tables.

Do you have any concerns about the ethics of this research?

No

Do you believe the article, in its current form, is fit for publication?

This paper needs major revisions and another round of peer review

Revised Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

no

How well did the authors respond to your comments?

4/5

What - if any - feedback do you feel the authors did not adequately respond to?

Some formatting inconsistencies and typos were not corrected. My comment regarding Figure S3 were not addressed, and a similar problem is now evident in Figure 4.

Based on your review, what should happen next?

This paper requires minor revisions but does not need further peer review

2nd Revised Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

no

How well did the authors respond to your comments?

5/5

What - if any - feedback do you feel the authors did not adequately respond to?

The authors addressed all my feedback.

Based on your review, what should happen next?

This paper is ready for publication

Would you like to be listed as a Collaborator on the final publication?

Yes, please list me as a Collaborator



Sean Sultaire

Initial Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

No

What did the authors do a good job with?

Conducting a large-scale survey for a challenging species of conservation concern, and resurveying the locations across time. The authors did a good job of connecting the research question to applied management of the species. The appropriate statistical methods were used to answer the question at hand and model selection was robust, although I recommend a few tweaks.

How do you think this research will contribute to the field?

Foremost, I think the research provides important information highly relevant to surveying for the species. The authors found fairly high nest survival even in younger forests and especially for large nests. This suggests the presence of large nests is a decent proxy for the presence of this species, which could streamline surveys considerably. The voles occupying the eagle nest is an interesting anecdote.

Regarding the study design and methods, what do the authors need to fix or improve upon to be fit for publication?

The study design and methods of the study are sound, but I do think the analysis was limited by the small sample size of tree vole nests, particularly in older forests. That is an understandable, however, given the difficulty in surveying tree vole nests. The difference in survey methods between young and old stands is also not ideal, but I understand why the authors took this approach given the low detectability of nests in these forests.

Regarding the analysis and interpretation of their findings, what do the authors need to fix or improve upon to be fit for publication?

I think that the analysis and interpretations are valid, but it would help to acknowledge the relatively small sample size for the survival analysis, which may have hindered their ability to detect covariate effects. It would be interesting to include a higher level structure in the survival model, such as a stand-level random effect, to see if there was any relationship in the survival of neighboring nests.

Is there anything else you think the authors need to fix in their article to be fit for publication?

In general the writing can be tightened up throughout the manuscript. The Results section in particular is long. The Management Implications need to be better tied to the results of the study and the implications for surveying for the species need to be emphasized more heavily. Content not central to the main analysis of nest survival (i.e., structures supporting nests) could be de-emphasized and model selection included in the main text. The authors need to clarify some of the discrepancies in the Results section, such as the difference in nests found versus what was included in the analysis.

Do you have any concerns about the ethics of this research?

No

Do you believe the article, in its current form, is fit for publication?

This paper requires minor revisions but does not need further peer review

Revised Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?



No

How well did the authors respond to your comments?

2/5

What - if any - feedback do you feel the authors did not adequately respond to?

Feedback requesting summaries on samples per stand and how that grouping was dealt with in analysis. Many of the authors responses were short and not very thorough.

Based on your review, what should happen next?

This paper needs major revisions and another round of peer review

Why is this article not ready to be published?

The paper is very long, over 13,000 words, making it a difficult read. Maybe the authors tried to present too many findings but I think they should be able to present this information more succinctly. Shortening the manuscript significantly would make it much more digestible for readers/ managers. The Intro and Discussion would be good places to start.

What do the authors need to change for you to accept this article for publication?

Shorten the manuscript by at least 25%. I know it is late in the review process to suggest this amount of editing but I'm now finding this a difficult read due to length and I suspect other readers will too.

2nd Revised Submission

Do you have any conflicts of interest that could bias your ability to provide an independent review?

no

How well did the authors respond to your comments?

1/5

What - if any - feedback do you feel the authors did not adequately respond to?

The feedback I included in the document appears to not have saved, as the comments are not displayed in the document i have access to for this round of revision. If I recall correctly, I did not leave many comments but did critique the manuscripts length, which appears unchanged in this version.

Based on your review, what should happen next?

This paper needs major revisions and another round of peer review

Why is this article not ready to be published?

The manuscript is far too long and needs to be shortened significantly to be accessible to scientists and managers.

What do the authors need to change for you to accept this article for publication?

Reduce the length substantially. All sections of the manuscript can be cut back