

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

RED GOSHAWK

Erythrotriorchis radiates

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable

Northern Territory: Vulnerable



Red goshawk. (Photo: I. Morris)

Description

The red goshawk is a large reddish-brown hawk, with conspicuous dark streaks from chin to belly, conspicuously barred on the underwing and tail. The head is whitish with dark streaks. The legs and feet are strong and yellowish, with prominent red feathering ("trousers"). Compared with the common Brown Goshawk, the wings are longer and more pointed and the tail is shorter.

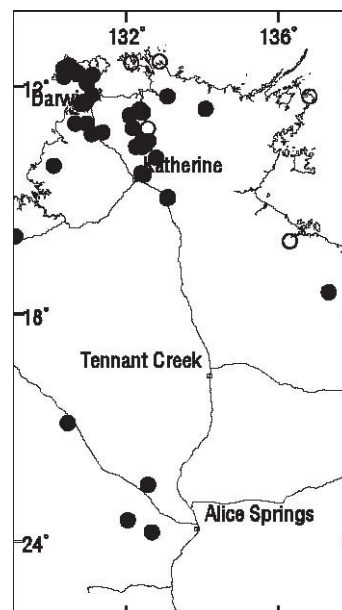
Distribution

The red goshawk occurs across much of northern Australia, from near Broome in the south-west Kimberley to south-eastern Queensland. Within this range it generally occurs in taller forests characteristic of higher rainfall areas, but there are some isolated recent records from central Australia.

It appears to be unusually common on the Tiwi Islands (Bathurst and Melville).

Conservation reserves where reported:

Garig Gunak Barlu National Park, Kakadu National Park, Litchfield National Park, Nitmiluk National Park.



Known locations of the red goshawk.

□ = pre 1970; • = post 1970.

Ecology

The red goshawk hunts mainly for medium-sized birds (up to the size of kookaburras and black cockatoos). Territory size is typically very large (up to 200 km²) (Debus and Czechura 1988; Czechura and Hobson 2000).

The preferred habitat is tall open eucalypt forest and riparian areas (including paperbark forest and gallery forests). The conspicuous basket-shaped stick nest is typically placed in large trees near watercourses (Aumann and Baker-Gabb 1991).

Threatened Species Information Sheet

Conservation assessment Based on a series of surveys across northern Australia (Debus and Czechura 1988; Aumann and Baker-Gabb 1991; Czechura and Hobson

2000), there is now reasonably reliable information available on distribution and total population. Garnett and Crowley (2000) collated these surveys to estimate the population size as 1000 breeding birds, and considered it to be Vulnerable at the national level, on the IUCN 1994 criterion of D1 (<1000 mature individuals).

Based on the proportion of the known distribution, the Northern Territory population probably accounts for about one-third of the total population (that is, about 330 mature individuals). Of this tally, an estimated 120 live on Melville Island (Woinarski et al. 2000). Developing forestry operations may reduce this Melville Island population by about 10%. Given these figures, the red goshawk qualifies as Vulnerable in the Northern Territory (under criteria C2a(i)) due to:

- population size estimated to number <10000 mature individuals;
- a continuing decline (observed, projected or inferred); and
- population structure with no subpopulation containing more than 1000 mature individuals.

Threatening processes Nationally, the red goshawk has been threatened chiefly by clearance of preferred habitat for agriculture, with some localised problems related to

illegal egg-collection, shooting, and fire (Garnett and Crowley 2000). In the Northern Territory, the most immediate threat is clearing of prime habitat on Melville Island for short rotation plantations of exotic pulpwod.

Conservation objectives and management

The management priorities are:

(i) to minimise the impact of the developing Melville Island forestry industry, through retention of adequate habitat especially around known nest sites, and (ii) the establishment of an appropriate monitoring program. Such habitat retention (around nesting sites) and monitoring is now established (Hadden 2000; D. Baker-Gabb pers. comm.)

Elsewhere, across its NT range, a monitoring program should be established, and populations safeguarded from ongoing clearing of tall open forests.

Compiled by

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