

# Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

## GREY FALCON

### *Falco hypoleucos*

#### Conservation status

Australia: Not listed

Northern Territory: Vulnerable



Photo: P. McDonald

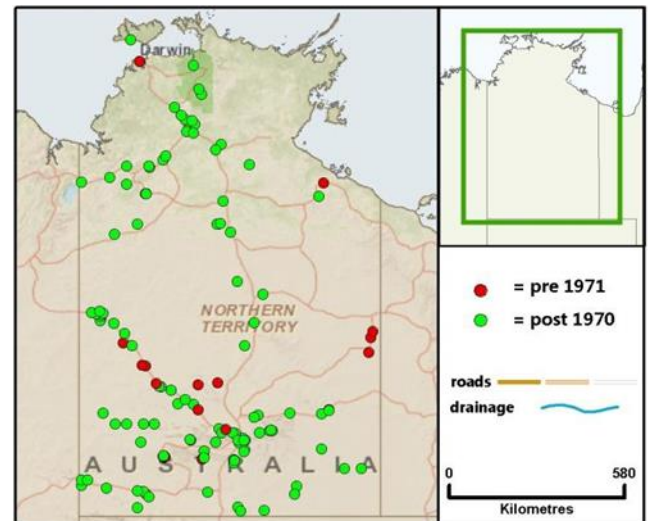
#### Description

The Grey Falcon is a medium-sized compact pale falcon. The head and upperparts are a light blue-grey, with darker grey flecking on the wings and barring on the tail. The wing-tips are black. The cheeks and chin are white, except for the faint grey tear under each eye, and the underparts are white with fine dark streaks. The bill is grey with a dark tip. The cere, eye-ring and legs are bright yellow.

#### Distribution

The Grey Falcon is found in low densities through much of the arid and semi-arid areas of Australia and has been recorded in all Australian mainland states and territories. The majority of records from the Northern Territory (NT) are from the southern half, but there are records all the way up to Darwin and also a record from Groote Eylandt.

Conservation reserves where reported: Finke National Park, Kakadu National Park, Nitmiluk National Park, Uluru National Park, Watarrka National Park and West MacDonnell Ranges National Park.



Known locations of the Grey Falcon

#### Ecology

Grey Falcons live in areas of lightly-timbered lowland plains, typically on inland drainage systems, where the average annual rainfall is less than 500 mm. Where they occur they are always at low densities and are mostly seen as singles or pairs. They use nests built by other species and prefer nests in the tallest trees along watercourses. Clutches are of one to four eggs. Nesting has been recorded from June to November, but in any one area may occur only in above-average rainfall years.

Grey Falcons hunt birds, often parrots and pigeons, typically from the air with a distinctive fast, level and low-to-the-ground hunting flight. They will also take insects on the wing. They many also pounce on mammals, reptiles and birds from a high perch.

### **Conservation assessment**

The status of Grey Falcons in Australia was assessed in 2010 by Garnett et al. (2011). They considered the Australia-wide population to be in the order of 500 pairs and they considered the species to be Vulnerable.

The population of breeding birds in the NT must be fewer than the Australia-wide population, so the species qualifies as Vulnerable in the NT (under criterion D1), based on:

A very small total population size (<1 000).

### **Threatening processes**

Threats to the Grey Falcon are not clearly defined. Habitat alteration and destruction through clearing for grazing and agriculture probably lead to declines in the species' southern and eastern ranges early last century, and confined them more to the arid parts of its range (Garnett et al. 2011). n the NT, such factors have probably been less influential.

Here landscape-scale changes in fire-regimes or grazing by feral or domestic herbivores may, in the long-term, reduce the availability of nesting trees and appropriate prey species.

### **Conservation objectives and management**

Conservation objectives are to maintain stable populations of Grey Falcons across their range in the NT and to maintain successful breeding. The management required includes developing methods of assessing population trends and implementing long-term monitoring of populations.

### **Compiled by**

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### **References**

Garnett, S.T., Szabo, J.K., and Dutson, G. (2011). The action plan for Australian Birds 2010. (CSIRO Publishing/Birds Australia, Melbourne.)