GREY GOSHAWK
Accipiter novaehollandiae

Status
Endangered (Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995), due to low densities and limited breeding distribution. A high proportion of core habitat is in unprotected areas.

Description
Medium-sized bird of prey. Also called the white goshawk, all Tasmanian specimens are pure white, with yellow legs and black beak. Immature birds have yellow eyes, adults red. Females are cockatoo-sized; males are much smaller.

Distribution and Habitat
The grey goshawk inhabits a variety of forest types in eastern and northern Australia and New Guinea and its neighbouring islands. The white colour morph predominates in the forests of Tasmania. Although the species has been recorded over much of Tasmania, most sightings seem to be restricted to large areas of wet forest including rainforests, with breeding densities greatest in blackwood swamps and riparian blackwood forest in the north west of the State (Thomas 1979; Mooney & Holdsworth 1988).

The potential habitat of the grey goshawk includes both foraging and nesting habitat within the potential range of the species. In general, forest with a closed canopy and low stem density, below 600 m altitude, is favoured by the birds for nesting during summer months (Mooney & Holdsworth 1988; Brereton 1993; Brereton & Mooney 1994). A study of nesting habitat conducted in 1993 found that high priority nesting habitat occurs along watercourses in wet forest with old growth or regrowth older than 50 years, particularly where blackwoods occur (Brereton 1993; Brereton & Mooney 1994). Blackwood was found to be a preferred nest tree species. Nests were also found in other species, including swamp paperbark, myrtle, woolly teatree and eucalypts (Brereton & Mooney 1994). There are also more recent anecdotal reports of grey goshawk nests in silver wattle (C Spencer, pers. comm.). Outside of blackwood swamp forests most nests are in riparian areas, but nests may occasionally be up to 100 m from a watercourse. Nests are most often in or on the edge of forest, sometimes in patches less than 5 ha (Brereton 1993; Brereton & Mooney 1994). Isolated trees are generally not used for breeding.

Grey goshawks hunt from a perch in the canopy, so require forest with an open structure under the canopy for foraging (Mooney 1981; Mooney & Holdsworth 1988; Olsen et al. 1990). The precise habitat requirements for foraging are not known, except in blackwood swamp forests, where it is thought that high priority areas have older blackwood and tea-tree with a closed canopy and an open structure under the canopy (Munks & Mooney 2003). Studies on other medium-sized wet
Forest raptors suggest that interconnecting forest areas of 20–30 square km are required to sustain a population. Mooney & Holdsworth (1988) suggest that mature wet forest provides the best conditions for hunting. Adult females have been found to hunt in more open areas than adult males (Mooney & Holdsworth 1988). Females eat mainly mammals (rodents, ringtail possums, rabbits) and birds such as rosellas, herons and currawongs. The smaller male catches mainly small birds, rodents and insects. Carrion is sometimes eaten. The Forest Practices Authority’s Fauna Technical Note 12 provides a detailed description of foraging and nesting habitat categories developed for use in forest patch assessments for coupes in the north-west of the state within forest types favoured by the grey goshawk in this area (e.g. blackwood swamp forest, Leptospermum or Melaleuca swamp forest, riparian blackwood and tea-tree scrub communities, wet eucalypt forest with blackwood/myrtle understorey and rainforest) (Munks & Mooney 2003).

**Reading**


