

SUCCESS STORIES



The Northern Goshawk

The Interior Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis* ssp. *atricapillus*) is a raven-sized bird of prey (also known as a raptor) found in the Interior of British Columbia. It has short, rounded wings, and a long tail which offer excellent maneuverability and quick acceleration. Because of these features, Northern Goshawks are excellent hunters, and will hunt a variety of mid-sized prey, ranging from small mammals, to hares and grouse.

Northern Goshawks are best suited to mature and old-growth forests, with 50% closed canopy and open understory: these forests offer them the best opportunity to ambush their prey, and provide ample nesting opportunities for their large nests, which are ~80cm in diameter.

An Umbrella Species

Because goshawks require mature and old growth forests, they are considered an umbrella species for the conservation of old growth habitats and the species that it supports.

Conservation Status

The Northern Goshawk is a species of conservation concern in B.C., due to its need for large areas of mature and old forest for breeding and foraging. Province-wide populations have been declining over recent years, primarily through harvest activities. Not only are Goshawks sensitive to habitat loss, but it is also suspected that loud industrial noise generated during forest operations has led to greater nest failure and abandonment.

Northern Goshawk Management in the Bulkley Valley

In 2020, due to mounting pressures on this species, a group of biologists and wildlife experts, including Frank Doyle, Mike Buirs, Blair Ells, Anne Hetherington and Chris Schell, developed the Northern Goshawk Management Tactical Plan and Northern Goshawk Toolbox. This was in response to declining populations, and habitat loss and fragmentation. The Toolbox provides direction and an operational framework to forest managers developing blocks within goshawk territory. The Tactical Plan has helped forest professionals to make informed decisions regarding goshawks and goshawk habitat.

DENNIS LAKE GOSHAWK NEST

In the summer of 2022, Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation (WCFC) discovered an active Northern Goshawk Nest in the Community Forest. To manage for this nest, WCFC utilized the Northern Goshawk Management Toolbox to propose a Goshawk Territory Management Zone, working with provincial representatives and local biologists. The contiguous mature forest that the Wetzin'kwa Community Forest provides maintains key characteristics of Northern Goshawk habitat.

The Dennis Lake Goshawk

In the summer of 2022, Wetzin'kwa field staff identified evidence of Northern Goshawk activity within proximity to Dennis Lake. An active Northern Goshawk nest was later identified in the area by Patricia Tomchuk, Ecosystems Biologists for Species at Risk in the Skeena Region, Frank Doyle, wildlife scientist and ecosystem biologist, and Aurora Lavender, RPF, MFC, and General Manager for the Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation.

In order to manage for this nest, Wetzin'kwa used the Northern Goshawk Management Toolbox and local knowledge to propose a new Goshawk Territory Management Zone that represents the summer forage area. Within this zone, goshawk habitat maintenance is prioritized within the working forest. Wetzin'kwa representatives are working closely with local and regional biologists to manage for goshawk habitat, as well as a variety of other values.

Managing for Wildlife Habitat in the Community Forest

Anticipated successes of this enhanced management and monitoring include increased habitat for goshawk prey (squirrels, rabbits, grouse, snowshoe hares, small birds) as well as other wildlife species: moose, bear, other fur bearers and fish. The new Goshawk Territory Management Zone overlaps several landscape corridors, which offer wildlife connectivity across the Bulkley Valley. Managing for the rich ecology in the community forest is one of Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation's key values. Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation continues to ensure that vulnerable areas within the community forest are identified and protected.