

NORTHERN GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

DESCRIPTION

The goshawk is a medium sized hawk separated from the similar sparrowhawk by its larger size, longer, broader wings and more rounded tail. Goshawks are also more bulky, with a small male goshawk weighing approximately three times as much as a similar-sized female sparrowhawk. Goshawks will nest in any type of woodland but tend to favour conifer plantations. Birds nesting in the uplands produce slightly fewer young than those in the lowlands with a mean clutch size of 3.5 where nesting occurs higher than 400m producing an average of 2.6 young per breeding attempt. Goshawks hunt in both woodland and open country where they will take a variety of prey species including crows, hares, rabbits, squirrels and pigeons as well as pheasants and red grouse.

LOCAL BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANCE

The UK population is estimated at between 400–450 pairs with approximately 120 of these in England. It is estimated that there are between one and five pairs of goshawk in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANCE

Goshawks are protected by Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act under which it is an offence to recklessly disturb any Schedule 1 species whilst it is nest building or is at (or near) a nest with eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

CURRENT ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

The goshawk was lost as a regular breeding species in the UK in the late 19th Century as a result of persecution and de-forestation. Although sporadic breeding attempts occurred after this, it is believed that the current British population is derived from birds that escaped from falconry collections and birds that may have been deliberately released. The national population has increased from a small numbers of pairs in the early 1960s to approximately 400-450 pairs in the late 1990s.

The UK Raptor Working Group's Report to Ministers identifies that nationally the illegal killing is the main factor restricting goshawk populations. Nest robberies by falconers and egg collectors are the other main threats.

Woodland management work, particularly tree felling can unintentionally cause disturbance to and/or destruction of nests. Once nest sites have been identified, management advice can prevent this from happening.

Whilst there are several sites within the National Park where goshawks are regularly reported the true population is not known. There are many areas of potentially suitable habitat across the National Park that may support breeding goshawks.

Although adult birds are regularly seen at a few sites and display flight has been observed annually, there are very few reports of any juvenile birds. All existing goshawk records

need to be collated and additional survey work may be necessary to determine the true status of goshawk and the sites where they are present.

AIMS OF THE SPECIES ACTION PLAN

- To ensure that there is no decline in the current goshawk population in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- In the long term (10+ years) achieve a natural breeding density of goshawks in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve these aims we need to:

- Determine the current distribution and status of goshawk in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- Determine the breeding success of goshawks and if applicable, identify causes of breeding failure.
- Ensure that known nest sites are protected from inappropriate woodland management work.

ACTIONS & TARGETS

To achieve these objectives the following actions should be carried out and the targets achieved within the time-scale given:

Actions	Target date	3 year cost £
Collate existing data on goshawk sightings to determine sites where Goshawks are present. If necessary carry out additional survey work.	2003	Officer and Volunteer Time
Determine breeding success at known sites. If applicable attempt to determine causes of any nest failures.	2004	Officer and Volunteer Time
Ensure that any goshawk nesting sites are protected from inappropriate felling operations and woodland management work.	2004	Officer Time

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTION PLAN?

Lead Agency	Key Partners
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group	Forestry Commission Landowners and managers Moorland Association Moorland Gamekeepers Association Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Local Natural History Societies