

Northern Goshawk

(Accipiter gentilis) [atricapillus subspecies]



Adult Northern Goshawks are immediately recognizable by their bold plumage and bright red eyes. They live across most of North America and occupy Canadian forests year-round.

STATUS

SARA

NO STATUS

Alberta

SENSITIVE

British Columbia

BLUE

Saskatchewan

NO STATUS

PRIMARY HABITAT

Old Coniferous/Mixedwood

TERRITORY SIZE

>1,000 ha

NEST TYPE

Stick

NEST REUSE

Common

STAND LEVEL

Nest-tree buffers 100–200 m containing mature/old forest with high canopy closure.

LANDSCAPE LEVEL

Maintenance of mature/old forests at multiple scales.

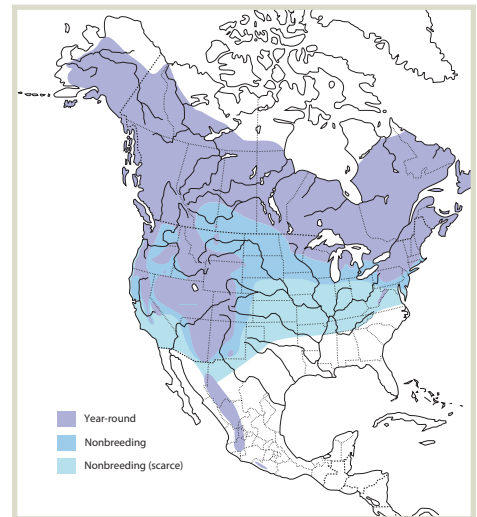
BREEDING WINDOW



HABITAT ECOLOGY

- Northern Goshawks live across a wide range of forest types, but are most common in mature and old forests, particularly coniferous stands where they are available.¹
- This species uses habitat at multiple scales:
 - “Nest site” is the 1-ha area surrounding the nest. It generally contains large-diameter trees (e.g., aspen ~30 cm dbh) and has high canopy closure (>60%).²
 - “Nest area” is the 8–20 ha area around the nest. It contains >50% mature/old forest and alternate nest trees.³
 - “Post-fledging area” is the 120–240 ha area around the nest. It contains alternate high amounts of mature/old forest, nest stands, snags, downed logs, and a well-developed understory that provides cover for flightless young.^{3,4}
 - “Foraging area” is the >1,000 ha area around the nest. It may contain more early- to mid-seral forest, but ideally contains >60% forest area >80 years old.^{3,5}
- The Northern Goshawk’s breeding period begins in February/March, meaning winter operations have an increased risk of incidental take or disruption of nests and/or fledglings.^{6,7}

RANGE MAP



RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- The Northern Goshawk’s close association with mature/old forest makes it sensitive to forest harvesting, which may reduce habitat quality by removing nest trees, opening the canopy, and promoting understory closure.¹
- This species’ responses to harvesting have been mixed but are generally characterized by lower occupancy of harvested areas. Reproductive success does not appear to be affected by harvesting.⁸

STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- While there is some evidence that nest-tree buffers may be effective⁹, they fail to maintain habitat at larger scales (see Landscape-level Recommendations).⁴
- Where harvesting cannot be avoided near known Northern Goshawk nests, the following precautions are recommended:⁶
 - Operators should place 500–1,000 m no-work zones around active nests from Feb. 15 to Aug. 15.
 - Nests should be buffered by at least 100 m (preferably >200 m), and these patches should be designed to reduce edge.