



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Queen Charlotte Goshawk

Accipiter gentilis laingi

The Queen Charlotte goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis laingi*) is a subspecies of forest-dwelling hawk that nests at low densities in the coastal rainforests of Southeast Alaska and the Queen Charlotte and Vancouver islands in British Columbia. The subspecies is smaller and darker than the more widespread northern goshawk (*A. g. atricapillus*).

Habitat

Queen Charlotte goshawks nest and forage in dense, wet, coastal rainforests. They primarily use medium and high volume forests for foraging and other daily activities and avoid non-forested and clearcut areas. Goshawks also use mature second-growth stands, and may nest in such stands where old growth is limited.

Nesting

Queen Charlotte goshawk nests are typically located in high-volume forest stands with relatively dense canopies. Nesting pairs are territorial, and their nests are usually distributed evenly across available habitat. Not all territories support nesting pairs, and the number of active territories (those supporting active nesting) varies annually, depending on prey availability and weather. Individual nests within a territory are frequently not used in subsequent years because pairs often move to alternate nests. Most of these alternate nests are clustered within an area of a few hundred acres.



Rich Lowell/ADF&G

Home Range and Movements

Breeding-season home ranges average about 11,000 acres (4,500 hectares) for females and 15,000 acres (6,000 hectares) for males. Males have been known to move as far as 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) between subsequent nests, but apparently remain in their established home ranges. Females will sometimes leave a nesting territory altogether and nest with a new mate in a different territory as far as 95 miles (152 kilometers) away. In winter, Queen Charlotte goshawks typically range beyond the immediate nest area, but stay in the region.

Food Habits

Goshawks typically hunt by flying between perches and launching attacks from those positions. They take a variety of prey, depending largely on local availability, which varies markedly among islands in the Queen Charlotte goshawk's range. Red squirrels and sooty grouse (formerly known as blue grouse) form the bulk of the birds' diet in many locations, although thrushes, jays, crows, ptarmigan, and woodpeckers are frequently taken as well. During winter, many avian prey species migrate from the region, reducing the variety and abundance of food available to the goshawks. There are few Queen Charlotte goshawk prey species that use open and edge habitats, so clearcut timber harvesting typically results in decreased food availability.



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Fledglings in Nest

Population Size

Goshawk populations are difficult to census, but breeding pair populations have been estimated by adjusting habitat capability (number of potential territories) to reflect observed nest area occupancy rates. There are an estimated 100 breeding pairs of Queen Charlotte goshawks on Vancouver Island, 8 to 15 pairs on the Queen Charlotte Islands, and 300 to 400 pairs in Southeast Alaska. Range-wide, there are probably about 500 pairs, plus an unknown number of non-breeding birds.

Conservation Designations

In Canada, the *laingi* subspecies is federally listed as “Threatened” under the Species at Risk Act. The State of Alaska has designated the bird a “species of concern” due to threats to its nesting and foraging habitat, and the Forest Service has designated it a “sensitive species.”

Impacts from Logging

Logging has impacted approximately 13 percent of the habitat in Southeast Alaska. Another 15 percent is likely to be lost over the next 50 to 100 years. Logging has impacted approximately 45 percent of the goshawk’s habitat in British Columbia (49 percent on Vancouver Island, 27 percent on the smaller Queen Charlotte Islands). Another 14 percent of the productive forest in British Columbia is likely to be cut over the next few decades. Fifty-five percent of the productive forest in Southeast Alaska is protected in reserves, compared to 9 percent in British Columbia.

Right: Range of the Queen Charlotte goshawk



Right: Florence Bay Nest Tree

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