

Northern Goshawk Inventory of the Fort Nelson Forest District

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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the status of the northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) in northeastern British Columbia due to the remoteness and limited accessibility of the area. However, current development activities require immediate input of species requirements for planning purposes. The primary objective of the inventory was to find and describe goshawk nest sites/territories. The study area was located in the Boreal White Black Spruce biogeoclimatic zone west and north of Fort Nelson. We surveyed habitats in 3 different ecoprovinces and associated ecoregions: the Northern Boreal Mountains (Muskwa Ranges, Muskwa Foothills), Boreal Plains (Sikanni-Beatton Plateau), and Taiga Plains (Fort Nelson Lowlands). All forest habitats were stratified into 4 seral stages (early, mid, mature and old) and 3 cover types (deciduous dominant, coniferous dominant and mixed). Two hundred and sixty call playback stations (CS) were surveyed in the summer of 1997. Three goshawks were detected (0.77 goshawks/100 CS). Seventeen standwatch surveys were conducted in March 1998. Three goshawks were detected. We also surveyed almost 110,000 ha using a fixed-wing aircraft and a helicopter (1997 and 1998), and found 110 stick nests. Most stick nests (77.8%) were in mature/old deciduous stands and 80% were in live trembling aspen trees (mean dbh 43 cm). Stick nests were easily detectable from fixed-wing aircraft in March. The rate of goshawk detections and the structure of the stick nests we assessed were comparable to the results of other studies. However, the results of the call playback and nest surveys were somewhat contradictory, demonstrating that more work needs to be conducted on goshawks in northern British Columbia.
