

Questions and Answers

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposed Rule to List the Queen Charlotte Goshawk as Threatened/Endangered in British Columbia under the Endangered Species Act

Where do Queen Charlotte goshawks live?

The Queen Charlotte goshawk's range runs from the mainland and islands of Southeast Alaska south of the international border between Mount Fairweather and Mount Foster, south through the coastal mainland of British Columbia west of the Coast Range (including the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeographic zone and wet Coastal Western Hemlock subzones and variants), the Queen Charlotte Islands, Vancouver Island, and the smaller islands around it..

What is the current status of United States and Canada Queen Charlotte goshawk populations?

Goshawk populations are difficult to census. Instead, the number of potential nesting territories (habitat capability) has been estimated by extrapolating observed nest area spacing or seasonal use area sizes across available habitat. Breeding populations are estimated by adjusting habitat capability to reflect observed territory occupancy rates, because not all potential territories are occupied in any given year. Biologists estimate that there are about 352 to 374 breeding pairs in British Columbia and 300 to 400 pairs in Southeast Alaska, plus an unknown number of non-breeding birds.

What is the process for adding a species to the list of threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act?

The Endangered Species Act requires that the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) make a decision on whether a species should be listed under the ESA based on the best available scientific and commercial information. Following publication of the proposed rule, a public comment period will be opened to allow interested people to submit information on the status of the Queen Charlotte goshawk, and the threats it faces. If requested, we will hold a public hearing. We will also solicit peer review on the proposed rule. Following the comment period, peer review, and a review of any recently acquired scientific and commercial information, the Service will make a final decision on whether the species should be listed.

What is the Fish and Wildlife Service proposing in this rule?

We propose to list the British Columbia distinct population segment (DPS) of the Queen Charlotte goshawk as threatened, except on the Queen Charlotte Islands (a significant portion of the DPS's range), where we propose to list the goshawk as endangered, under the ESA. This proposal, if made final, would extend the Act's protection to this subspecies in British Columbia, Canada, on Vancouver Island and the surrounding smaller islands, the Queen Charlotte Islands, and the coastal mainland west of the Coast Mountains.

What are the criteria for listing a species as threatened or endangered under the ESA?

The ESA requires that a species be listed if it is imperiled by one or more of the following five criteria:

- Present or threatened destruction, modification or curtailment of its habitat or range;
- Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific or educational purposes;
- Disease or predation;
- Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or
- Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence.

Thus identification of any one of these factors as a threat to a species can require the listing of the species under the ESA.

Which of these ESA criteria is judged to be most important to the future status of Queen Charlotte goshawk?

Threats facing the Queen Charlotte goshawk are primarily related to the loss of nesting and foraging habitat and declines in prey populations due to timber harvest. Other factors may add to the pressure upon populations already stressed by other factors such as habitat loss and prey shortages.

The ESA uses the term: “foreseeable future”; what is this?

The ESA does not define “foreseeable future.” In other ESA listings, it has often been interpreted to be a function of generations of the species in question and/or habitat regeneration cycles. In this finding, the Service relied upon estimates of land available for, and protected from, timber harvest. We do not know precisely how long it will take before the population stabilizes or goes extinct following habitat loss, but we do expect the goshawk population to continue to decline for several generations after habitat loss peaks in about 50 years. We therefore define foreseeable future for the British Columbia DPS as approximately 50 years plus a period of up to several generations for the population to adjust..

Is hunting or collection of Queen Charlotte goshawks legal today?

Queen Charlotte goshawks are not a legally hunted species in either the United States or Canada, although occasional illegal shootings might occur. Take of these birds for falconry is extremely limited, with one known instance in Alaska since 1990. In British Columbia, the species has been protected from any harvest, including collection for falconry purposes, since 1994.

Are Queen Charlotte goshawks currently recognized as being an at-risk species by any nations or organizations?

In Canada, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife determined, in 1995, that the Queen Charlotte goshawk was “Vulnerable.” In 2000, this status was upgraded to “Threatened” and in 2002 the bird was officially listed as “Threatened” under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

Following assessment by the provincial Conservation Data Centre, the Province of British Columbia added the subspecies to its "Red List" in 1998, and in 2004 the Province included the subspecies in the category of "Species at Risk" under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (i. e., those species at risk that may be affected by forest management and require protection in addition to that provided by other mechanisms).

What are the benefits of listing a species in another country?

Under section 9 of the Act, it is unlawful for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to import a listed species into the United States, or to sell or offer for sale any such species in interstate or foreign commerce. In addition, the Service cooperates with other countries in the conservation of foreign listed species. In this case, this proposed listing is consistent with the "threatened" status of the Queen Charlotte goshawk under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

What is currently being done to protect Queen Charlotte goshawks in Alaska?

In response to concerns over sensitivity of the bird to timber harvest, the Alaska Region of the U. S. Forest Service designated the Queen Charlotte goshawk a sensitive species in 1994. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game designated the bird a "species of special concern" because of threats to its nesting and foraging habitat. Queen Charlotte goshawks are also protected from harvest under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Why are you proposing to list the Queen Charlotte goshawk in Canada, but not Alaska?

Habitat conversion due to logging has been more extensive in coastal British Columbia than in Southeast Alaska. In Southeast Alaska, approximately 13 percent of productive forest has been harvested to date, with another 15 percent expected to be harvested over the next 50 to 100 years. In British Columbia, approximately 35 percent of forest has been harvested, with another 24 percent expected to be harvested over the next 50 years.

Most (55 percent) of the productive forest in Southeast Alaska is protected in reserves, compared to 13 percent in British Columbia. An additional 17 percent of the productive forest is likely to remain unlogged outside protected reserves in Alaska, compared to 19 percent in British Columbia, because it is on inoperable terrain, or protected from harvest to reduce impacts to other resources, such as water quality and fish habitat.

Why are you proposing to list the population on the Queen Charlotte Islands as endangered, rather than threatened like in the rest of British Columbia?

According to the Endangered Species Act, an endangered species is one currently in danger of extinction, while a threatened species is one in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The goshawk population on the Queen Charlotte Islands is very small, at 10 to 18 breeding pairs, has produced very few young in recent years, and is physically and genetically isolated from other goshawk populations. Because the population is so small, it is particularly vulnerable to disease outbreaks, environmental catastrophes, and fluctuations in populations of its limited prey resources. Therefore, the population on the Queen Charlotte

Islands is in more imminent danger of extinction than populations elsewhere in British Columbia, which are more likely to face extinction as their habitat declines in the future.