

Raptors skilful hunters

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

The word raptor is used to describe a group of birds known as birds of prey. It comes from the Latin word 'rapere' which means to seize or carry off.

These species are the most common raptors in the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin. They can be seen from the coast through to the mallee and into the arid and semi-arid areas. Their habitats include forests, woodlands, grasslands, agricultural and urban areas. These birds are active hunters during the day. Owls are also raptors and mostly hunt at night.

All raptors are fully protected in South Australia.

BLACK KITES live in a variety of habitats, from timbered watercourses to open plains and often frequent tips in outback towns. They are normally seen in small groups, but also gather in flocks around bushfires. They prey on lizards, small mammals and insects, especially grasshoppers. (NB)

WHISTLING KITES have a characteristic loud whistling call. They live in woodlands, open country and particularly wetlands and rivers. (NB)

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITES are small grey and white birds with black shoulders and wing tips on the underside. They live in treed grasslands, paddocks and perch conspicuously along roadsides where they hunt mainly for rodents. They hunt more actively on overcast days or in the evening. (GC)

NANKEEN KESTRELS are small hovering falcons that live in open woodlands, plains and agricultural areas. They are usually seen on telegraph poles or dead trees, and are one of the most commonly recorded Australian birds. (NB)

BROWN GOSHAWKS live in most timbered habitats. Southern birds tend to be nomadic, and immature birds move north when dispersing during winter. They feed on small mammals, such as rabbits, birds, reptiles, insects and sometimes carrion. (NB)

AUSTRALIAN HOBBOYS live in open woodlands, plains, paddocks, coastal cliffs and dunes, towns and city parklands. These fast flyers are keen hunters of young parrots and starlings, which they take on the wing. (NB)

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLES are Australia's largest raptor, and are recognised by their long wings and wedge-shaped tail. They range from the coast to the outback, but prefer woodlands, forests and open country. They hunt young kangaroos, rabbits and hares. Carrion is also an important food source, especially near major roads. (NB)

BROWN FALCONS prefer to live in open grassland, agricultural areas and semi-deserts with scattered trees or structures for perching. Unlike most falcons they are agile on the ground, where they pursue small reptiles, mammals, insects and small ground-nesting birds. (NB)

WHITE-BELLIED SEA EAGLES are Australia's second-largest raptor. They live along the coastline and inland close to large rivers, reservoirs and lakes. They feed on fish caught near the water's surface as well as birds, mammals and carrion (NB).

SWAMP HARRIERS have an owl-like facemask and live near fresh or salt wetlands and swampy areas. Many move north in late summer and autumn. They hunt for birds and eggs, large insects, frogs, reptiles and small mammals up to the size of hares or rabbits. (GC)

SPOTTED HARRIERS are large raptors with a striking white-spotted chestnut breast. They live in open wooded country, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas, open mulga and mallee woodland. Their favourite prey are ground birds such as quail and pipits but they also hunt rodents, rabbits and lizards. (NB)

PEREGRINE FALCONS are large powerfully-built raptors that live in most habitats and are common around the Adelaide Hills and ranges, coast, mallee and even semi-desert regions. They hunt small and medium-sized birds, as well as rabbits and other mammals. (NB)

LITTLE EAGLES are small, powerful and stocky with a short square tail, long flat wings and heavily feathered legs. They live in woodland, forests and open country, extending into the arid zone where their prey includes rabbits, cockatoos and other birds and insects. (GC)



Contact us - South Australian Murray-Darling Basin
Natural Resources Management Board Murray Bridge
Phone - (08) 8532 9100

WEB - www.samdbnrm.sa.gov.au

Email - samdbenquiries@sa.gov.au

Photos courtesy of Nicholas Birks (NB) and Graeme Chapman (GC)



Government of South Australia
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin
Natural Resources Management Board