



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Red goshawk a good sign for new conservation reserve**

Tuesday, 29 April 2008

The red goshawk is one of at least 23 threatened species that have a greater chance of survival thanks to a new conservation reserve in far north Queensland.

The red goshawk is Australia's most threatened bird of prey, with only 700 breeding pairs left in the world.

Bush Heritage Australia today announced the acquisition of the 43,500 hectare Yourka Reserve, situated 130 kilometres south of Cairns on the western edge of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The reserve is located within one of Australia's 15 biodiversity hotspots, the Einasleigh Uplands.

"This magnificent conservation reserve protects over 39 ecosystems, a number of which are not protected anywhere else on earth," said Doug Human, CEO of Bush Heritage Australia.

"Yourka Reserve features iconic rainforest remnants, declining wet eucalyptus woodlands, grasslands, and numerous waterways and lagoons. Much of the reserve is listed as important for geographically restricted and threatened plants, tree-dwelling mammals, and as a wildlife corridor and drought refuge."

Ecologist David Baker-Gabb was delighted when he found a red goshawk nest during a wildlife survey of Yourka Reserve. It meant that Yourka Reserve was good news for the goshawk, as well as other threatened species such as bats, and hollow-dwelling birds and mammals.

"The red goshawk is a good indicator of highly productive land and biodiversity," said ecologist David Baker-Gabb. "If it's good enough for red goshawks, it's good enough for a whole range of other threatened species that rely on old growth trees for habitat and food."

The nationally vulnerable fluffy glider and the nationally endangered northern bettong are among the other threatened species whose habitats are protected on Yourka Reserve.

The reserve straddles two different bioregions, high altitude forest in the east falling away to diverse, drier woodlands in the west. This environmental gradient and a wide range of soil types are responsible for the incredible diversity found on the reserve.

"Saving properties with altitudinal variation is an important strategy for safeguarding biodiversity against the impacts of climate change," said Doug Humann.

"By protecting extensive areas of land with differences in elevation, we can provide displaced animals and plants with more suitable habitats to move into."

"The numerous waterways on Yourka are also important corridors for the movement of plants and animals, and function as vital refuges during drought."

The purchase of this important sanctuary for conservation was made possible through the generosity of over 2,000 supporters, the David Thomas Challenge, The Nature Conservancy, and the Australian Government's Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program.

**Notes:**

Bush Heritage Australia is a national non-profit organisation that strives to protect Australia's unique and abundant diversity of life. It achieves this by using the best available science to acquire and manage land, water and wildlife of outstanding conservation value.

Bush Heritage's vision is to protect one per cent of Australia's high conservation value land by 2025 - that's over 7 million hectares.

Bush Heritage currently owns 30 reserves across Australia, covering over 938 000 hectares. These reserves safeguard at least 83 threatened vegetation communities and more than 445 threatened plants and animals. Our reserves protect over 242 vegetation communities, and provide habitat for over 3200 plant and animal species.

Bush Heritage targets the ecosystems and species that are the most poorly reserved and under the greatest threat. Our environmental scientists and ecologists are rigorous in identifying, selecting and managing our environmental reserves.

Bush Heritage works collaboratively with neighbours, corporate and individual pastoralists, governments, scientific institutions, indigenous groups and other conservation organisations to encourage regional conservation outcomes.

Over three-quarters of the land acquired by Bush Heritage is in Queensland. Yourka is the 3<sup>rd</sup> property purchased within Bush Heritage's "Queensland Uplands and Brigalow Belt" anchor region.

More than 17 000 people have already provided support, as donors, volunteers or partners in our work. In 2006/07, we received more than 13 million dollars from donations and grants to do vital conservation work around the country.

The acquisition of Yourka Reserve was supported by Bush Heritage Australia's Anchors in the Landscape campaign, believed to be the largest ever environmental fundraising campaign of its kind in Australia. In just two years, this campaign raised over \$22.4 million from philanthropic donors and governments.

Yourka Reserve was supported by funding from the Australian Government's Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program. This program will be superseded by the \$180 million commitment to the National Reserve System within the Caring for Country initiative: <http://www.petergarrett.com.au/532.aspx>

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**Photographs to accompany this media story are available from:**

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