

SPECIES MANAGEMENT PROFILE

Tyto novaehollandiae subsp. castanops Masked Owl (Tasmanian)

Group: Chordata (vertebrates), Aves (birds), Strigiformes, Tytonidae

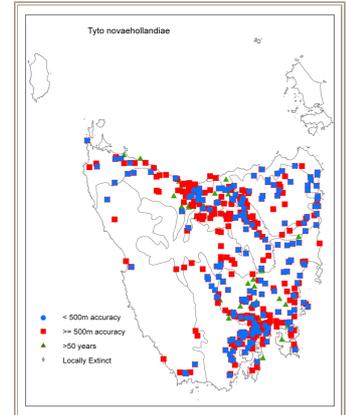
Status: *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995:* **endangered**
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999: Vulnerable

Endemic: Found only in Tasmania

Status:



The Tasmanian Masked Owl (*Tyto novaehollandiae castanops*) is a subspecies of Masked Owl which occurs only in Tasmania. Its population has been estimated to comprise approximately 500 breeding pairs. It is a large bird with a mask-like facial disc and distinctive husky, screeching call. The Tasmanian Masked Owl hunts at night for small mammals and birds in a range of habitats which contain some mature forest, usually below 600 m altitude - these include native forests and woodlands as well as agricultural areas with a mosaic of native vegetation and pasture. Birds pair for life, occupying a permanent territory and relying on hollows in old-growth trees for nesting and roosting. The main threats to the Tasmanian Masked Owl are clearing of nesting/roosting and foraging habitat (particularly tree hollows), secondary poisoning, and competition with other bird and mammal species for the limited number of suitable nesting hollows.



Key Points

- **Important:** Is this species in your area? Do you need a permit? Ensure you've covered all the issues by checking the Planning Ahead page.
- **Important:** Different threatened species may have different requirements. For any activity you are considering, read the Activity Advice pages for background information and important advice about managing around the needs of multiple threatened species.

Habitat

- 'Habitat' refers to both known habitat for the species (i.e. in or near habitat where the species has been recorded) and potential habitat (i.e. areas of habitat with appropriate characteristics for the species and within the species potential range which have not yet been adequately surveyed).
- If in doubt about whether a site represents potential habitat for this species, see the Forest Practice Authority's Technical Note on identifying masked owl habitat, and contact the Threatened Species Section for further advice.
- The known range of the Tasmanian Masked Owl includes the whole of Tasmania excluding King Island and the Furneaux group.
- Habitat for the Tasmanian Masked Owl includes the following elements: foraging habitat - a diverse range of forest, woodland and non-forest vegetation including agricultural and forest mosaics; nesting habitat - eucalypt forests and woodlands containing old growth trees with suitable hollows for nesting/roosting, but will also nest in isolated old growth trees with suitable hollows.

What to avoid

- Clearing nesting/roosting habitat, including single and isolated hollow-bearing trees
- Clearing forest and woodland foraging habitat
- Secondary poisoning of birds
- Collisions with man-made structures

Surveying

Key	Survey reliability more info
M	Peak survey period
M	Potential survey period
M	Non-survey period

To ensure you follow the law - check whether your survey requires a permit. Always report any new records to the Natural Values Atlas, or send the information direct to the Threatened Species Section. Refer to the Activity Advice: Surveying page for background information.

<i>Tyto novaehollandiae subsp. castanops</i>	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
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S	S	O	O	N	N	D	D	J	J	F	F	M	M	A	A	M	M	J	J	J	J	A	A
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- The Tasmanian Masked Owl is a cryptic species, hunting at night and rarely observed during the day. Dedicated surveys for the subspecies generally use a playback system; this involves broadcasting an amplified Masked Owl call (a drawn-out rasping 'cush-cush-sh-sh') which can elicit an answering call from a nearby owl.
- Extensive survey effort may be required to obtain clear results. It is common for playback calls to go unanswered in locations where owls are known to be present some of the time, leading to very low rates of detection.

Helping the species

- Learn to identify the Tasmanian Masked Owl (including its distinctive call) so as to recognise the species if it occurs on your property. If in doubt, seek expert assistance with identification.
- If you live or work in the area where the species occurs (see distribution map, above), look out for and record any observations of the species. All records of this species can provide important information on distribution and abundance.
- If you are interested in knowing for certain whether the species occurs on your land, organise a formal survey. You may need to employ an ecological consultant to do this. Your local Bushcare or Field Naturalist club may be able to assist you with a survey.
- Always report any observations of the species to the NRE Natural Values Atlas, or else provide the data direct to the Threatened Species Section. Records stored on the NVA are a permanent record and are accessible to other people interested in this species.
- Consider the needs of the whole habitat. Preserving a threatened species' habitat is the best way to manage both the species and the environment in which it lives.
- For long-term protection of populations on private land – consider protection of habitat through a vegetation management agreement or conservation covenant. See the NRE Private Land Conservation Program for more details.

Cutting or clearing trees or vegetation

- To avoid loss of nesting/roosting habitat – do not clear old growth forest containing potential nesting trees, and other non-old growth forests which contain old-growth elements including hollow-bearing trees.
- To avoid loss of nesting/roosting trees - do not remove single or isolated older trees which contain hollows suitable for nesting.

Agriculture

- Loss of old growth, hollow-bearing pasture trees for establishment of plantations and fixed irrigation systems is a major cause of loss of nesting habitat for this species.
- To avoid loss of nesting trees - do not remove single or isolated old-growth trees in pasture land.

Construction

- To prevent collisions of birds with man-made structures - where bird collisions have occurred with an existing structure such as powerlines, investigate and implement ways to mitigate the chance of further collisions.

Use of chemicals

- To prevent secondary poisoning of birds - avoid using single-dose rat poisons in nesting and foraging habitat.

Further information

Check also for listing statement or notesheet pdf above (below the species image).

Conservation Advice

Cite as: Threatened Species Section (2025). *Masked Owl (Tasmanian)* (*Tyto novaehollandiae* subsp. *castanops*): *Species Management Profile for Tasmania's Threatened Species Link*. [https://www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au/Pages/Masked-Owl-\(Tasmanian\).aspx](https://www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au/Pages/Masked-Owl-(Tasmanian).aspx) Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. Accessed on 16/10/2025.

Contact details: Threatened Species Section, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, GPO Box 44, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 7001. Phone (1300 368 550).

Permit: A permit is required under the *Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* to 'take' (which includes kill, injure, catch, damage, destroy and collect), keep, trade in or process any specimen or products of a listed species. Additional permits may also be required under other Acts or regulations to take, disturb or interfere with any form of wildlife or its products, (e.g. dens, nests, bones). This may also depend on the tenure of the land and other agreements relating to its management.

