

# SWAMP HARRIER

information and facts



## HOW TO IDENTIFY A SWAMP HARRIER

Swamp Harriers or "Swampies" as some farmers now call them, are slow flying birds of prey or raptors that live for up to ten years.

Harriers are usually seen gliding in large circles or hovering at 'stall speed' a few metres above a grain or fodder crop. They flush out prey along fence lines or over swampland, and occasionally eat carrion by the roadside. They are masters at vertical take-off and landing.

## NESTING SITES

Harriers build a nest on the ground, usually within grass or crop cover.

A Harrier pair will begin to construct a ground platform nest of dry grasses and sticks until it measures about 60cm across or about the size of a dustbin lid. Nests are typically built up to be around 30cm tall.

Surveys have identified nest sites in traditional hay and cereal crops and also in sophisticated field plantings of pyrethrum, poppies and peas.

Egg incubation period is between 21 and 23 days with an average of three chicks hatched.



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU LOCATE A SWAMP HARRIER NEST

- **Pre harvest** – place around the nest site with brightly flagged fence droppers, providing at least a tractor length (5 x 5m) around the nest.
- **Post harvest** – If possible, keep stock out of the stubble until the young have flown (at approx. 8 weeks old) temporary fencing is an alternative.
- **Shade is crucial** – If the site is destroyed during harvest, a make-shift one can be created by placing three smaller bales into a U shape allowing entry/exit for adults access to feed the chicks.
- **Avoid handling the chicks** – Talons are their best line of defence and can inflict serious injury, when in doubt seek professional advice.

## FAST FACTS

Adults are speckled brown with a white rump and pale yellow legs. As they age, they develop more distinct facial disc markings

Juveniles are darker, more solid brown colour with a paler rump

Seen singly, or in pairs during spring/summer breeding season

When in flight, their wings form a distinctive 'V' shape

Wing span of approx. 1 metre

Standing height of up to 60 cms

Ground-nesting

Females weigh 850 – 900 grams (larger of the two)

Males are 2/3 the size of the female

Call is a short whistling 'kee'

Eat small animals and birds including mice, rats, rabbits and carrion (dead and decaying).



## Harriers IN THE HARVEST

## REPORT A SIGHTING

**Report a sighting on our Facebook alert page >>**

Please leave details such as

- Location/nearest road intersection
- Date/date range
- Harrier activity
- Crop type and paddock size

