

Australasian harrier *Circus approximans* 55 cm

NEW ZEALAND NATIVE, NOT THREATENED

Also known as swamp harrier, kahu or hawk, this is the only raptor currently known from the Chatham Islands. The harrier is a large hawk with long-fingered wings forming a shallow V in flight, and a long, slightly rounded tail. It has dark brown upperparts with buff underneath. Harriers become paler with age; females are larger than males. They are frequently seen soaring over open farmland, swamps and forest edges, in search of carrion or prey. Australasian harriers are widespread throughout Australasia and have become more numerous in New Zealand, and the Chatham Islands, as a result of land clearance for farming. They are common and breed on Chatham and Pitt Islands, are usually present on Rangatira, and less often on Mangere.



Australasian harrier.  
Photo: Peter Reese.