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## HARRY THE HARRIER FROM YANKEE HAT (VIA ROCKHAMPTON)

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Harriers, the hawks in the ‘circling’ genus *Circus*, occur worldwide. They have acute hearing and a facial disc which apparently augments and funnels sound to their ears. In flight they often quarter low and slowly over grassland close to the ground with their wings held in a characteristic dihedral. Their long legs help them snatch prey from tangled vegetation. Australia has two species, the Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis* and the Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*. Both species occur in the ACT, but only the Swamp Harrier has been found breeding here (so far) and only one or two breeding pairs are known for the ACT. They nest on the ground in swamps and tall grasslands. Swamp Harriers can be polygamous, one breeding male with two or more females in different nests (Olsen 2014).

On 12 Dec 2017 we banded and satellite-tagged an adult male below Yankee Hat at Gudgenby in Namadgi at about 1000m above sea level (asl). This is the first time the species has been satellite tagged (see Photos 1 to 4). We called him ‘Harry’. Swamp Harriers are known to migrate (Debus 2012, Olsen 2014) but their migration is poorly understood. The ACT ranger at Gudgenby, Ben O’Brien, told us harriers were only present for half the year, during the spring-summer breeding season, so we hoped a satellite tag would reveal where Harry spent the winter.

There were two other adult harriers with Harry on the Gudgenby swamp in 2017, apparently two females. Swamp Harriers are late breeders compared to most other ACT raptors and by 14 Jan 2018 we noted two fledged juveniles on the swamp, five harriers in total. We saw prey deliveries by the adults. In early February 2018 Harry left the fledged young and travelled to an area between Cabramurra and Tantagara NSW at about 1400m asl. He stayed a few weeks before slowly drifting north. He stopped at the Fitzroy River in Rockhampton Qld close to sea level and stayed there. In late July, he started back south and was back at Gudgenby by early August (Fig. 1).

Because of the drought, the swamp at Gudgenby was much drier in September 2018 than it was in September 2017, so there may not be enough water or plant growth for the harriers to breed. Again, there were three adult harriers on the swamp, including Harry. We will keep an eye on them and report their progress. If you see them, or any other nesting Swamp Harriers, please avoid disturbing them. Many Swamp Harriers desert their young if disturbed (Olsen 2014), and it would be a shame if Harry lost his young after making the longest round-trip migration ever recorded for a Swamp Harrier (so far).



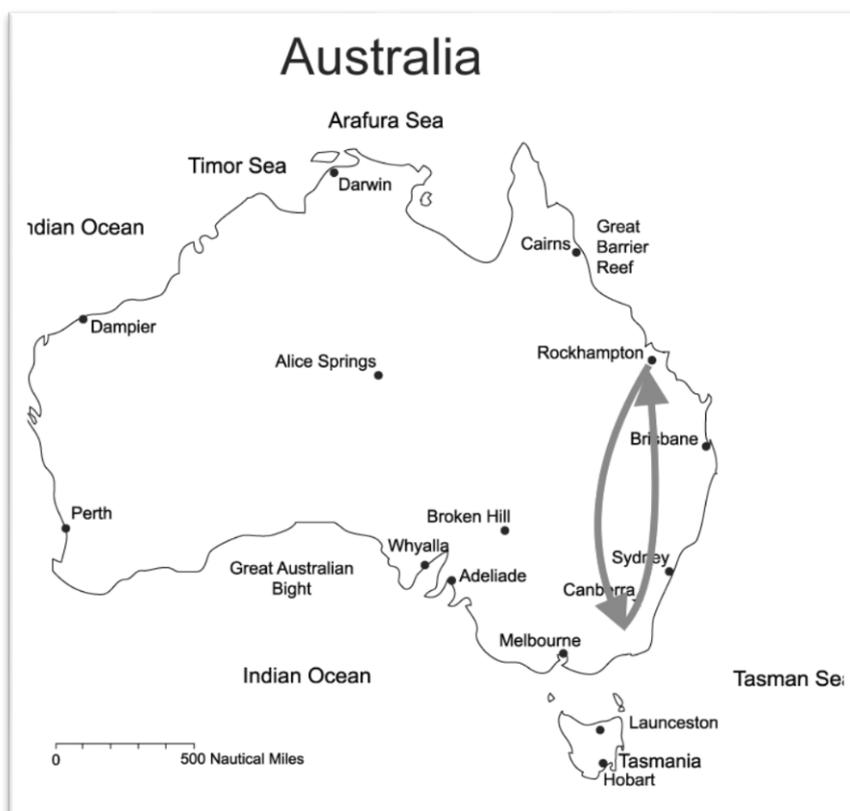
**Photo 1. Harry the adult male Swamp Harrier.**

**Photo 2. A hood keeps the harrier calm while we band him and attach the satellite tag.**

**Photo 3. Harry being released.**

**Photo 4. Harry flying off with the satellite tag attached.**

**(All photos by authors).**



**Figure 1. Harry the adult male Swamp Harrier nested in Gudgenby south of Canberra and wintered near Rockhampton Qld.**

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**References**

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