Minister for Parks and Wildlife Bess Price is calling on the public to keep an eye out for a white-bellied sea eagle that has been shot with an arrow in the Top End.

“I was shocked when I was told someone had shot the bird with an arrow likely to have been fired from a crossbow in the Leaders Creek area,” Mrs Price said.

“It was first spotted with the protruding arrow by a member of the public near the Leader’s Creek mouth on May 5, but wasn’t seen again until another member of the public sighted the eagle on May 17.

“Parks and Wildlife rangers and the Leader’s Creek boat ramp manager visited the area yesterday and took a photo of the resident pair including the female eagle with the arrow.

“The arrow appears to have gone through the inner edge of the upper thigh and luckily missed bone and vital organs.

“They tried to catch the eagle, but rangers say the bird could not be tempted by the bait.

“Fortunately rangers say the eagle still looks agile and reasonably healthy, and they will keep monitoring the bird to ensure that it remains healthy.”

Parks and Wildlife ranger Ray Chatto said it was disappointing that the eagle could not be caught yesterday.

“The eagle can still fly and roost without difficulty, and has been seen picking up fish,” Mr Chatto said.

Given this and the fact they are a long lived bird and mate for life it was decided to give the bird some more time to see if it can survive the ordeal itself if it can’t be caught for veterinary attention.

“The arrow may work its way out through the damaged area over time, and the eagle’s health will also be monitored by the boat ramp manager on a regular basis.

“It is extremely disappointing that this eagle has been illegally shot. Penalties for killing or interfering with protected wildlife could result in a maximum fine of $72,000 or up to five years imprisonment.”

Members of the public are urged to keep providing information about the eagle, in order to monitor its progress, and also any information that may help lead to catching the offender.

Information can be supplied by contacting the Parks and Wildlife Commission NT on 0401115702.

Media Contact: Lauren Crawley 0417 145 050