

## Rough-legged Hawk

### Vital Statistics

L = 21 in., WS = 53 in.

Wt. = 2.2 lb.

Pale chest and head

Relatively small bill

Feathered legs and small feet

**Habitat** – Open country, fields and marshes, nests on Arctic tundra

**Behavior** – Hunts from perch or relatively low flight, often hovers, feeds on small rodents



### Visual identification tips



soaring - slight dihedral

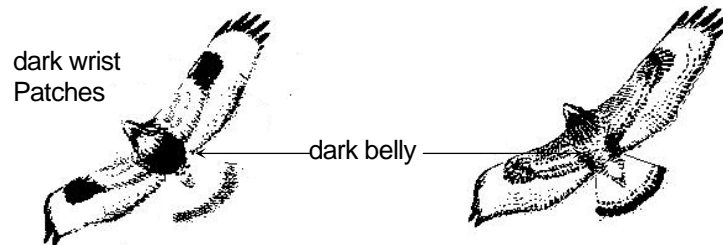


gliding - nearly flat



Other flight silhouettes

light morph has very dark belly



dark wrist Patches

dark belly

- large, slender buteo, long broad-tipped wings, long tail
- occurs in light and dark morphs, few intermediates
- may congregate in communal roosts during cold periods
- overwinters in Colorado

## Broad-winged Hawk

### Vital Statistics

L = 15 in., WS = 34 in.

Wt. = 14 oz.

Brown chest and head

Underparts are barred reddish brown

Pointed wingtips

Unmarked underwings except dark border



**Habitat** – Deciduous or mixed deciduous coniferous woodlands

**Behavior** – Hunts from perch, feeds on toads, frogs, chipmunks, shrews, voles and nesting birds

### Visual identification tips

soaring



soaring - nearly flat



glides with wings angled down

wingbeats relatively quick, stiff, deep



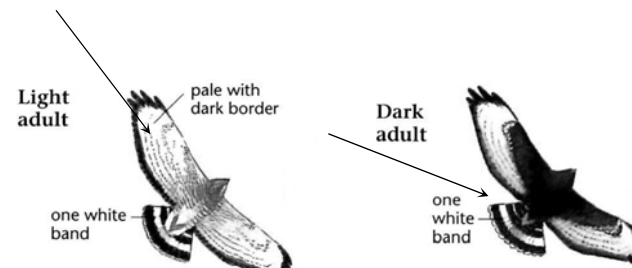
soaring



glides with wings angled down



Other flight silhouettes



Light adult

pale with dark border

Dark adult

one white band

one white band

- small buteo with pointed wingtips
- occurs in light and dark morphs
- may be seen in both spring and fall migration near water features
- nests in deciduous forests in Northeastern Colorado

# THE BUTEOS

Red-tailed hawk

Ferruginous hawk

Rough-legged hawk

Swainson's hawk

Broad-winged hawk

### Abbreviations

L = length from tip of bill to end of tail

WS = wingspan from wing tip to wing tip

Wt = weight in pounds (lb.)

### Terminology

**Buteo** – group of broad-winged soaring raptors

**Gape** – mouth opening

**Kiting** – method of hovering in place using wind currents rather than flapping

**Morph** – color variation

**Patagial bar** – dark area near shoulder along leading edge.

**Primaries** – outer wing (flight) feathers

## Red-tailed Hawk

### Vital Statistics

L = 19 in., WS = 49 in.

Wt. = 2.4 lb.

Stocky, broad-winged hawk  
Distinctive, rusty red tail in adult, pale “backpack straps” form a V on upper surface.



**Habitat** – Deserts, fields, farmland, grasslands, woodlands, may prefer forest edges

**Behavior** – Hunts from perch using sit and wait strategy or may soar and scan for prey, also uses kiting technique and feeds on small to medium-sized mammals and snakes

### Visual identification tips



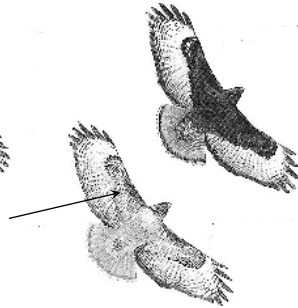
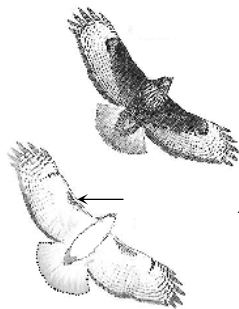
gliding



soaring – slight dihedral



Kiting



- Red-tails are the most common hawk in N. America.
- “typical” Red-tails have a light breast, dark belly-band and rusty red tail.
- patagial bars are good indicators on lighter morphs

## Ferruginous Hawk

### Vital Statistics

L = 23 in., WS = 56 in.

Wt. = 3.5 lb.

Pale head, large beak, long gape  
bright white breast, rufous back  
Feathered legs and large feet



**Habitat** – Semi-arid open country, desert, prairie and grasslands

**Behavior** – Hunts from perch or the air, often seen on the ground, feeds on small mammals and occasionally ground birds like pheasants.

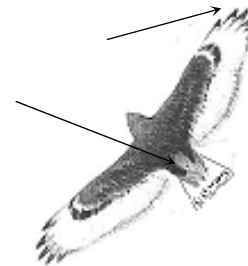
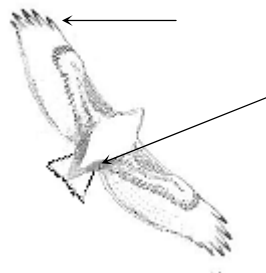
### Visual identification tips



soaring - distinct dihedral



gliding



- largest of the buteos
- long wings, no patagial bar as in Red-tails
- upper surface of primary feathers whitish toward outside
- year around resident of eastern Colorado
- very pale underneath, contrasts with dark leg feathers

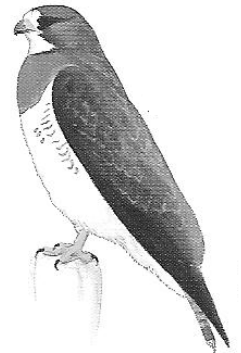
## Swainson's Hawk

### Vital Statistics

L = 19 in., WS = 51 in.

Wt. = 1.9 lb.

Dark bib, whitish chin  
Mostly white chest, sometimes with brown barring, long tail has dark band near tip.



**Habitat** – Arid to semi-arid open country, Inhabits farmlands and pastures of great plains

**Behavior** – Often seen on fence posts or on the ground, diet varies seasonally from rodents and small birds to insects.

### Visual identification tips

Similar profile as ferruginous but smaller size, wings narrower



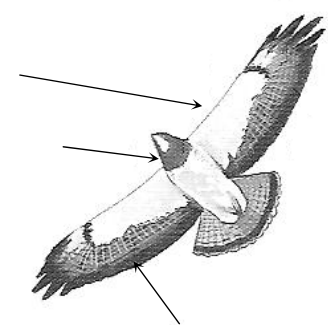
soaring - distinct dihedral



gliding – nearly flat



dark morph adult



light morph adult

- wings longer than Red-tail's
- dark morphs make up about 10% of population
- mainly summer resident of Colorado
- migrates to Argentina in winter

## Osprey

### Vital Statistics

L = 22-25 in., WS = 58-72 in.

Wt. = 3.5 lb.

Black and white patterned plumage

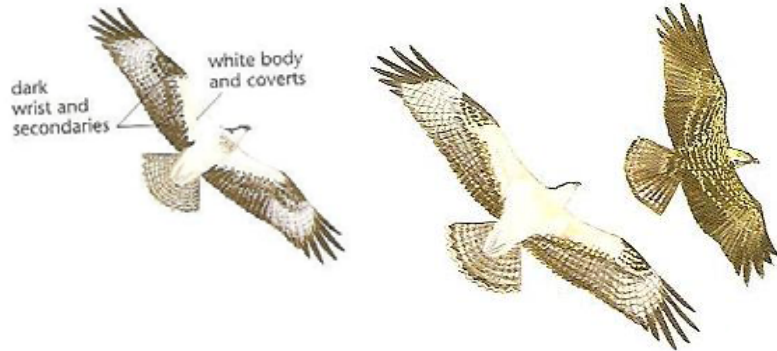
Dark eye stripe separates head and throat



**Habitat** – Wetland habitats, especially coastal marshes, as well as lakes and rivers.

**Behavior** – Feeds on fish it captures by hovering, then plunging feet-first into water.

### Visual identification tips



Adult

Juvenile

- Soars on long, lanky, crooked wings
- Flight feathers are uniformly dark
- Migrates south in winter
- Mainly summer resident in Colorado

## Northern Harrier

### Vital Statistics

L = 17-23 in., WS = 38-48 in.

Wt. = 15 oz.

Owl shaped facial disk

White rump patch

Tail long and narrow



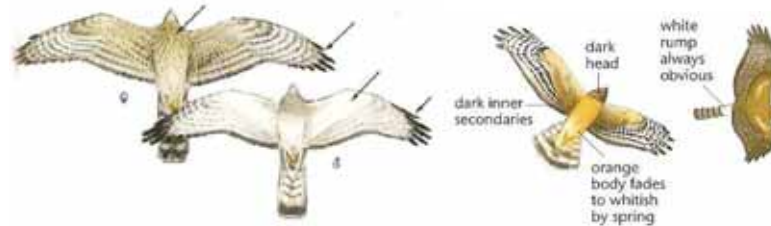
**Habitat** – Coastal and inland marshes, as well as open meadows, fields, and grasslands.

**Behavior** – Usually seen coursing low over fields or marshes; it captures small birds and mammals with a sudden pounce.

### Visual identification tips



wingbeats smooth and rowing; long wings and tail; slender body



Adult Female/Male

Juvenile

- Male is gray, female and immature are brown
- Wing beat loping and regular. Unique cadence to wing beats
- Wing attitude can appear like falcon or buteo
- Resident in Colorado

# THE EAGLES AND OTHERS

Bald Eagle

Golden Eagle

Osprey

Turkey Vulture

Northern Harrier

### Abbreviations

L = length from tip of bill to end of tail

WS = wingspan from wing tip to wing tip

Wt = weight in pounds (lb.)

### Terminology

Primaries – outer wing (flight) feathers

Nape – back of neck

Dihedral – wings in v-shape while in flight

Wing attitude – how wings are held

Differences in plumage by sex and/or age

## Bald Eagle

### Vital Statistics

L = 31-37 in., WS = 70-90 in.

Wt. = 9.5 lb.

White head and tail in adults

Head and bill are massive

Visible in flight



**Habitat** – Almost invariably adjacent to wetlands, especially along coastlines and around large lakes and rivers.

**Behavior** – Usually found near water, it feeds mainly on fish (often scavenged) and waterfowl captured in pursuit.

### Visual identification tips



Adult

2<sup>nd</sup> Year

Juvenile

- Takes 4 to 5 years to reach maturity & adult plumage
- 1<sup>st</sup> year white limited to underwing linings
- 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> year underwings patches generously white
- Wing beat is slow, robust, deeply arched on upstroke
- Winters in large numbers in Colorado with a few breeding pairs year round

## Golden Eagle

### Vital Statistics

L = 30-40 in., WS = 80-88 in.

Wt. = 10 lb.

Golden feathers on nape

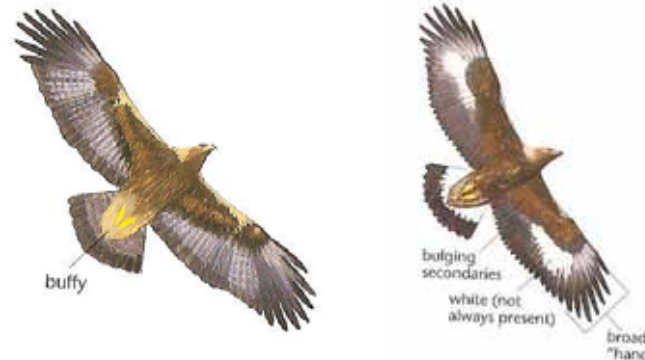
Overall large and dark



**Habitat** – Mountainsides and canyons, as well as open grasslands and prairie. Eastern salt marshes in winter

**Behavior** – It hunts mammals and birds mainly from the air, often in spectacular stoops.

### Visual identification tips



Adult

Juvenile

- Takes 3 to 4 years to reach maturity and adult plumage
- Wing beat slow and ponderous, shallower than Bald Eagle
- Juvenile similar in appearance to immature Bald Eagle
- Feathered down legs to toes
- Year around resident of Colorado

## Turkey Vulture

### Vital Statistics

L = 35-32 in., WS = 69 in.

Wt. = 4 lb.

Uniformly dark black

Red featherless head up close

Bold dihedral



**Habitat** – Often soars above open land, including agricultural areas, pastures, and roadsides; roosts in deciduous woodlands.

**Behavior** – Often seen soaring or roosting in groups. They find food by smell.

### Visual identification tips



wingbeats clumsy and slow; body moves up and down; flight unsteady and rocking



Adult

Juvenile

- In flight -long tail and appearance of no head
- Rarely flaps, bold dihedral
- Mainly summer resident of Colorado
- Migrates south in winter



## American Kestrel

### Vital Statistics

L = 8-10 in., WS = 20-24 in.  
Wt. = 3.4-5.3 oz

Smallest falcon  
Long tailed and pointy wings



**Habitat** – Found in open country and in cities.

**Behavior** – Feeds on insects, reptiles, and small mammals, hovering over prey before plunging. Often perches on telephone lines. Frequently bobs its tail.

### Visual identification tips



Adult Female



Adult Male

- The most colorful falcon, best field marks are white cheeks with two bold black mustache marks
- Soars with wings flat and hovers regularly
- When perched, wingtips fall short of tail tips
- Common over most of North America

## Gyr Falcon

### Vital Statistics

L = 20-25 in., WS = 43-51 in.  
Wt. = 3.1 lbs.

Heavily built, wings broader based than other falcons.  
Adult has yellow-orange eye ring, cere and legs



Gray Morph

**Habitat** – Open tundra near rocky outcrops and cliffs.

**Behavior** – Flies with slow, powerful wing beats. Preys on birds.

### Visual identification tips



- Extremely rare winter visitor, breeds in arctic tundra of Alaska and N. Canada
- Three color morphs – dark, gray, and white
- Best field marks are two-toned underwings on gray and dark morph falcons. On the white morph - all white body and underwings with black wingtips

# The Falcons

Prairie Falcon    Peregrine    Merlin

American Kestrel    Gyr Falcon

### Abbreviations

L = length from tip of bill to end of tail  
WS = wingspan from wing tip to wing tip  
Wt. = weight in pounds (lb.)

### Terminology

**Primaries** – outer wing (flight) feathers

**Nape** – back of neck

**Axillaries** – similar to our underarms

**Cere** - A fleshy or waxlike membrane at the base of the upper beak through which the nostrils open

**Wing attitude** – how wings are held

**Differences in plumage by sex and/or age**

## Prairie Falcon

### Vital Statistics

L = 15.5-19.5 in., WS = 35-43 in.  
Wt. = 1.6 lb.

**Habitat** – Dry, open country and mountains of the Western N. America.

**Behavior** – Preys upon small mammals and birds.



### Visual identification tips



Adult



- Confused with Merlin and Peregrine Falcon
- The best field marks are the dark axillaries
- Square head with white marks directly behind eyes when perched
- Usually nests in cliff sites

## Peregrine Falcon

### Vital Statistics

L = 16-20 in., WS = 36-44 in.  
Wt. = 1.6 lb.

Crown and nape black  
Black wedge extends below eye, forming a distinctive helmet.

**Habitat** – Open wetlands near cliffs, Also nests on bridges and tall buildings.

**Behavior** – Preys on birds.



### Visual identification tips



Adult



- Best field marks are dark, bold mustache and uniformly dark underwings
- Wingtips almost reaches tail tip when perched
- Wing beat is fluid and elastic
- Usually found near water fowl and shorebirds

## Merlin

### Vital Statistics

L = 9-12 in., WS = 21-27 in.  
Wt. = 4.5-8.3 oz

Uniformly dark, lack of bold mustache mark.

**Habitat** – Uses a variety of forested habitats with open areas.

**Behavior** – Powerful flyer; does not hover. Soars with wings flat. Catches birds in flight by a sudden burst of speed rather than by diving.



### Visual identification tips



Adult Male

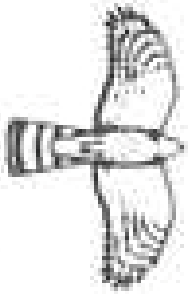


Adult Female

- Very aggressive
- Wing beats are quick and continuous with short strokes
- Will take prey bigger than itself
- Point to point flight is consistent and direct

# Which accipiter is it?

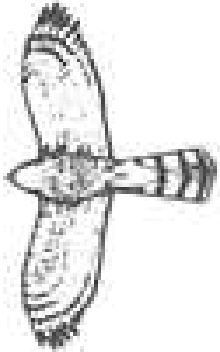
Northern Goshawk, Coopers, Sharp-shinned



1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.SSHA
- 2.NOGO
- 3.COHA



Cooper's Hawk

Sharp-shinned Hawk

# Accipiters

Northern Goshawk

Cooper's Hawk

Sharp-shinned Hawk

### Abbreviations

L = length from tip of bill to end of tail  
WS = wingspan from wing tip to wing tip  
Wt = weight in pounds (lb.)

### Terminology

**Accipiter** – group of short-winged, long tailed forest raptors.

**Plumage Differences** – feather colors due to age or sex.

**Crown** – Top of head

**Nape** – back of neck

**Tail bars** – lines of colors differences on tail

**Superciliary** – area of feathers like an eyebrow



## Northern Goshawk

### Vital Statistics

Male L = 18- 20 in., WS = 38- 41 in.

Wt. = 24- 36 oz.

Female L = 21- 24 in., WS = 41- 45 in.

Wt. = 26- 43 oz.

Best field marks are long wings that taper in soar and glide and appear pointed when flapping and wedge-shaped tail tip. Adult's dark head with white superciliary lines.



**Habitat** – Breeds in forests of Northern U.S. south in Appalachian Mts. to West Virginia, throughout Canada and Alaska, and in forested Western mountains.

**Behavior** – Weaves thru mature forests like a jet plane, the Goshawk rarely gives its prey time to react.



wingbeats powerful and stiff; flight steady

### Visual identification tips



- Flies with wrists thrust forward much like Sharp-shinned Hawk but head look for superciliary line
- Wedge shaped tail
- Hunts in coniferous forests

## Cooper's Hawk

### Vital Statistics

Male L = 14-16 in., WS = 28- 30 in.

Wt. = 10-14 oz.

Female L = 16-19 in., WS = 31- 34 in.

Wt. = 17- 24 oz.

Best field marks area crown darker than back and rounded tail with a wide white band on tip, often worn by spring.



**Habitat** – Breeds in open forests over most of U.S. and southern Canada, except Florida peninsula and northern Great Plains. Winters throughout U.S. except northern Great Plains

**Behavior** – Experts in ambush and surprise attack, appearing from nowhere and stopping at nothing in the pursuit of prey. They do not hesitate to enter brushy areas or to run on the ground after prey.



### Visual identification tips



- Flies with more straight at the wrist and head projects out from the leading edges
- Rounded tail
- Hunts fields near forest edges and open forests

## Sharp-shinned Hawk

### Vital Statistics

Male L = 9-11 in., WS = 20-22 in.

Wt. = 3- 4 oz.

Female L = 11-13 in., WS = 23-26 in.

Wt. = 5- 8 oz.

Best field marks are small rounded head with eye centrally placed and square-tipped tail, with at most a narrow white band on tip.

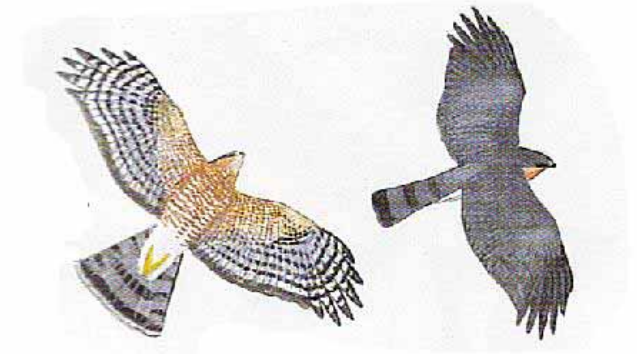


**Habitat** – Breeds in dense forest stands. Winters throughout U.S. except northern Great Plains

**Behavior** – hunts by stealth and camouflage, both in gaining close approach to its victim and in avoiding capture by larger raptors.



### Visual identification tips



- Small narrow head that does not extend much past wrists that are thrust forward in flight
- Squared off tail
- Hunts in forests and forest edges