

# Red-tailed Hawk

# Red-tailed Hawk

## Appearance

Stocky and large; broad, rounded wings. Adults have rounded, reddish-orange tail tipped with black and white. Female and male have same coloring; female is larger than male.



Heavy-bodied and broad-chested, tapering abruptly to tail.



Wingbeats are typically short and deep; often soars on thermal currents.

# Red-tailed Hawk

## Appearance

Look for pale underparts streaked with usually distinctive belly-band.



Belly-band is apparent when perched.



Belly-band is apparent when in flight.

# Red-tailed Hawk

## Appearance

Red-tailed hawks have sharp, hooked bills and strong talons (hooked claws) to grab and carry prey.



# Red-tailed Hawk Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home>

## SONGS

Red-tailed Hawk song is a high-pitched, descending scream with hoarse tone. The most familiar vocalization is a raspy scream, *kee-eeee-arr*.

## CALLS

Males screech loudly and repeatedly to defend territory, especially during mating season. Females and nestlings call to their males for food during the nesting period. Juveniles beg with an insistent *pewee, peweee*.

Listen to the songs and calls at:

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-tailed Hawk/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-tailed_Hawk/sounds)

# Red-tailed Hawk

## Diet

Red-tailed Hawks are carnivorous, eating small mammals such as voles, rabbits, and squirrels. Their diet also includes small birds, reptiles, and occasional carrion.



Hunts by watching from high perch, then swoops down to capture prey in its talons.

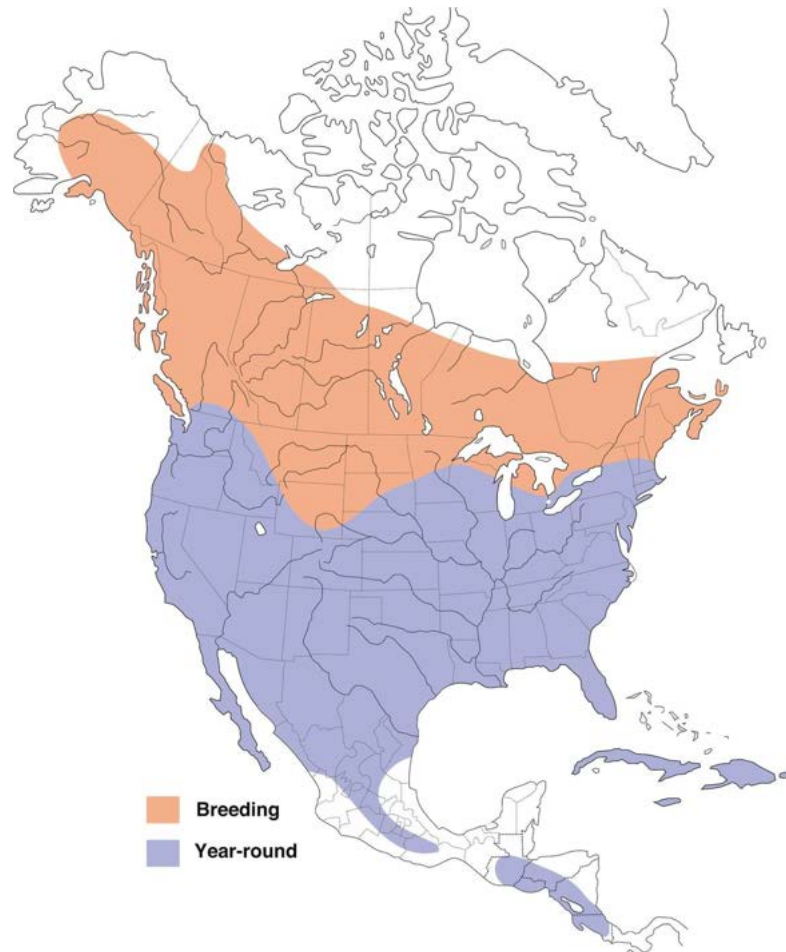


Small prey are usually carried to perch, large prey often partly eaten on the ground.

# Red-tailed Hawk

## Range

Red-tailed Hawks can be seen in DuPage County year-round.



# Red-tailed Hawk

## Habitat

An inhabitant of open country, seen on roadside posts and soaring over fields and woods.  
Also found in woodlands, prairie groves, and mountain plains.



Red-tailed Hawk on top of fence post.



Red-tailed Hawk soaring over open country.



Red-tailed Hawk in a prairie grove.



# Red-tailed Hawk

## Behavior

Red-tailed Hawks spend much of their time hunting by soaring on thermal updrafts and by sitting on tall trees, waiting for prey. Often seen atop telephone poles, wires, and fence posts.



Red-tailed hawk perched on treetop.

# Red-tailed Hawk

## Behavior

Most common roadside raptor across much of North America.  
These keen-eyed and efficient hunters are adaptable and have even embraced human habitats.



# Red-tailed Hawk

## Behavior

Red-tailed Hawks typically build their nests near the top of tall trees, where they have a view of the surroundings. In urban environments, they may also build their nest on the ledge of a tall building.



Both the male and female build the nest. Sometimes they refurbish one of the nests they've used in previous years. Incubation is by the female. The male brings food to the nest during incubation. Pairs usually mate for life.

## Red-tailed Hawk Literature/Prose

"When I bestride him,  
I soar, I am a hawk."

~ William Shakespeare



# Red-tailed Hawk Feeders

In general, Red-tailed Hawks do not frequent bird feeders. They prefer open areas for mammals such as mice, squirrels, snakes, and game birds. However, during migration and breeding season, they may wait near feeders and swoop in on smaller birds.



Some of a Red-tailed Hawk's favorite snakes are bullsnakes (gopher snakes) and rattlesnakes.



Red-tailed Hawks swallow small prey whole, bones and all.

# Red-tailed Hawk Names

## Common name Red-tailed Hawk

*Red-tailed* refers to the hawk's red tail.

*Hawk*: Anglo-Saxon *hafoc*, "a hawk," cognate with *have* in the sense of "grasp" or "seize."



## Scientific name *Buteo jamaicensis*

*Buteo* is Latin, as used by Pliny for "buzzard," an early name for hawks as well as vultures.

*jamaicensis* is the Latinized form for "of Jamaica."

