

# A GUIDE TO HAWKS SEEN IN NORTH AMERICA

These are migrants seen in most of North America. Because many species differ in appearance due to age and various light and dark morphs, especially in the west, only the adult of the most common form is illustrated.

## KNOW YOUR SILHOUETTES



### FALCONS

Streamlined - long, pointed wings; long, tapered tail; strong rowing wing beats; wings look less pointed and tail less tapered when not in direct flight.



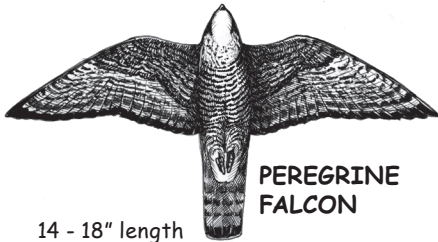
### ACCIPITERS

Short, wide, rounded wings; long tail; flap-flap-flap-glide flight.



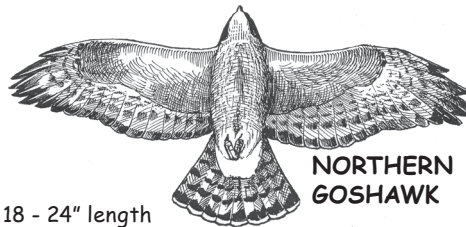
### BUTEOS

Broad wings and broad, rounded tail; often seen soaring in wide circles high in the air.



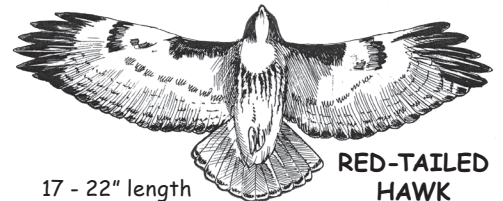
PEREGRINE FALCON

- 14 - 18" length
- Light breast and throat.
- Crow size.
- Quick, powerful wingbeats.



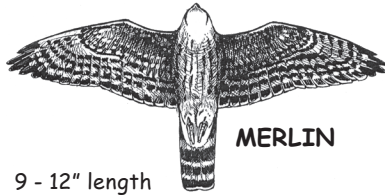
NORTHERN GOSHAWK

- 18 - 24" length
- Pale underbody; gray upperparts.
- Prominent white undertail coverts.
- Heavy body; larger than crow.



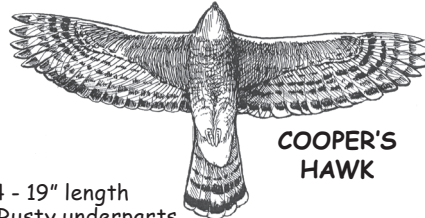
RED-TAILED HAWK

- 17 - 22" length
- Unmarked light-to-red tail; 9 morphs.
- Light breast; variably streaked belly band.
- Dark leading edge to wing; shallow dihedral.



MERLIN

- 9 - 12" length
- Banded tail.
- Dark; heavily streaked underneath.
- Fast, direct flight.



COOPER'S HAWK

- 14 - 19" length
- Rusty underparts.
- Round-tipped, long tail.
- Near size of crow; stiff wing beats.



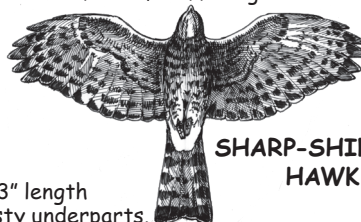
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

- 15 - 18" length
- Black tail with narrow, white bands.
- Dark wing linings.
- Crescent "windows" near tip of wing.



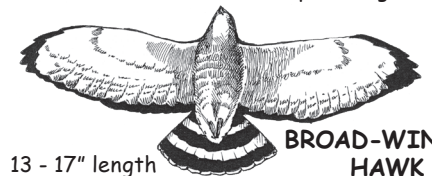
AMERICAN KESTREL ♀

- 8 - 11" length
- Light underneath; size of jay; buoyant flight.
- Tail: rufous - male; reddish, barred brown - female.
- Wings above: blue-male; barred brown-female.



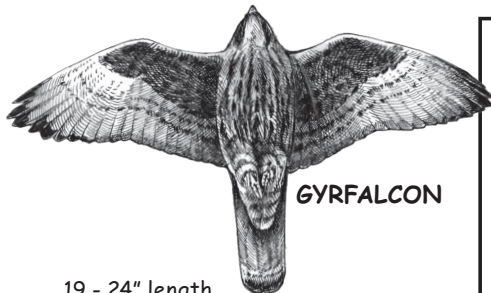
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK

- 9 - 13" length
- Rusty underparts.
- Square or notched tail tip.
- Near size of jay; floppy wing beats.



BROAD-WINGED HAWK

- 13 - 17" length
- Smallest buteo; crow size.
- Short tail with equal black and white bands.
- Whitish underwings with dark trailing edge.



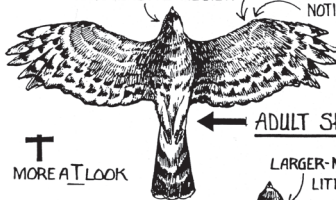
GYRFALCON

- 19 - 24" length
- Robust body; larger than Peregrine.
- 3 color morphs.
- Rare Arctic visitor.

NOTE: Some hawks soar and glide with their wings raised above the horizontal, called a dihedral.

### SHARP-SHINNED vs COOPER'S

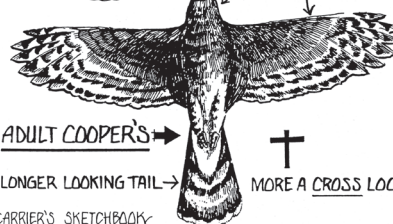
SMALLER-LESS HEAD PROTRUSION → MORE CURVED LEADING WING EDGE  
NOTICEABLE WRIST



← ADULT SHARP-SHINNED

↑ MORE A T LOOK

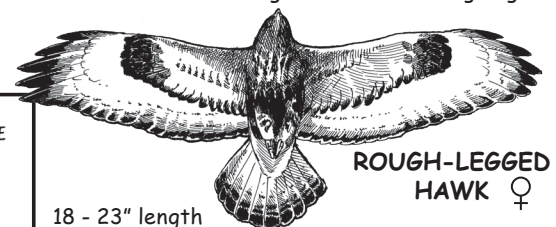
← LARGER-MORE PROTRUDING HEAD  
LITTLE-OR NO WRIST BEND



← ADULT COOPER'S

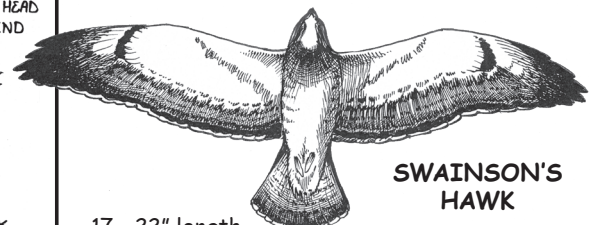
↑ MORE A CROSS LOOK

PAUL CARRIER'S SKETCHBOOK



ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK ♀

- 18 - 23" length
- Dark belly (most); dark wrists; strong dihedral.
- Tail white; 1 or more dark subterminal bands.
- Dark morph: dark body and wing linings.



SWAINSON'S HAWK

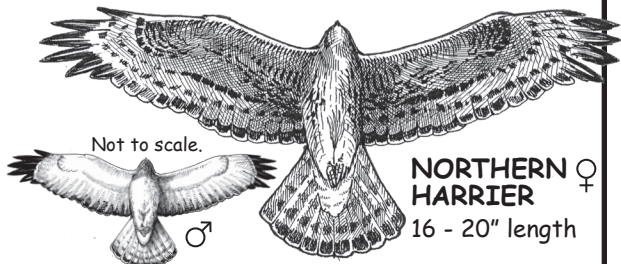
- 17 - 22" length
- Dark breast and flight feathers.
- White belly and wing linings; 3 morphs.
- Soars with strong dihedral.

## REGIONAL SPECIALTIES



**OSPREY**  
21 - 26" length

- Eagle sized; clean, white body.
- Black wrist marks.
- Glides with kink (M) in long, narrow wings.



**NORTHERN HARRIER** ♀  
16 - 20" length

- Long, narrow wings and tail; sharp dihedral.
- Brown above, streaked brown below - female.
- Gray above, pale below with black wing tips - male.

### SOUTHERN



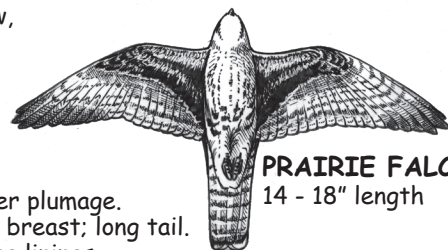
**MISSISSIPPI KITE**  
13 - 15" length

- Long, pointed wings; slim body.
- Light body; dark wings; narrow, black tail.
- Buoyant, acrobatic flight.



**FERRUGINOUS HAWK**  
20 - 26" length

- Largest buteo; eagle-like.
- Pale below with dark leggings.
- Mostly white tail; 3 color morphs.



**PRAIRIE FALCON**  
14 - 18" length

- Size of Peregrine; much paler plumage.
- Narrow moustache; spotted breast; long tail.
- Dark armpits and partial wing linings.

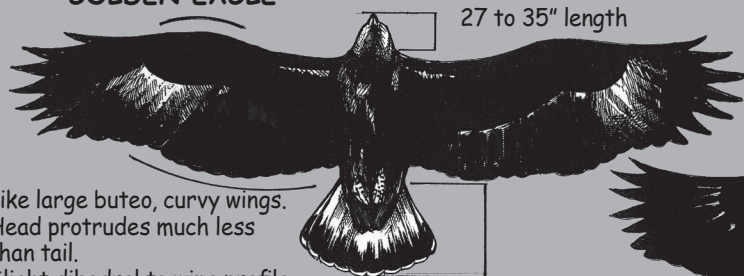
### WING PROFILE



**BALD EAGLE**



**GOLDEN EAGLE**  
**GOLDEN EAGLE**

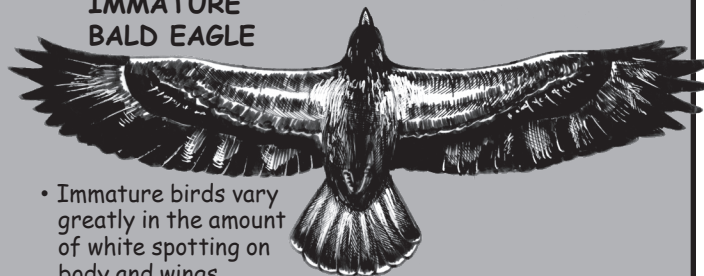


27 to 35" length

- Like large buteo, curvy wings.
- Head protrudes much less than tail.
- Slight dihedral to wing profile.

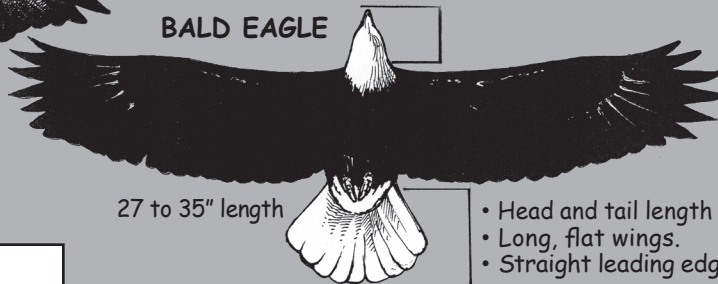
NOTE: Some hawks soar and glide with their wings raised above the horizontal, called a dihedral.

### IMMATURE BALD EAGLE



- Immature birds vary greatly in the amount of white spotting on body and wings.
- White showing on wing linings is surely a Bald Eagle.

### BALD EAGLE



27 to 35" length

- Head and tail length similar.
- Long, flat wings.
- Straight leading edge to wings.



24 to 28" length

### TURKEY VULTURE

- Dark wing linings with light flight feathers.
- Small head; long tail; sharp dihedral.



23 to 28" length

### BLACK VULTURE

- Small head; shorter wings and tail than TV.
- White primary patches; wings held flat; stiff wing beats.

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