

**Ornithology. Raptors:** Discovering Raptors: From Field to Aviary

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Department of Animal Science

**Week One:** July 5 – 11, 2026

**Schedule:** Monday - Friday, 9-12 and 1:30-3:30, except Wednesday afternoon.

**Location:** Frank Morrison Hall, room 174 with some field work at Raptor Barn, Game Farm  
Road

# A GUIDE FOR HAWKS SEEN IN THE NORTHEAST

Because many hawks differ in appearance due to age and various dark and light morphs, only the adult of the most common form is illustrated.

## KNOW YOUR SILHOUETTES



### FALCONS

Streamlined - Long pointed wings; Long compressed tapered tails; Strong rowing wing beats; lose some pointed wing and tapered tail look when not in direct flight.



### ACCIPITERS

Short, wide rounded wings; long tails. flap, flap, flap - sail flight.



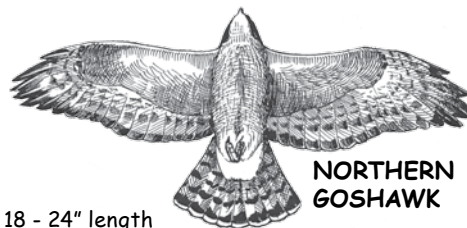
### BUTEOS

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



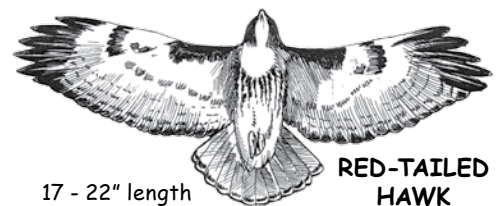
**PEREGRINE FALCON**

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



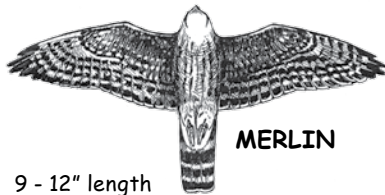
**NORTHERN GOSHAWK**

- 18 - 24" length
- Pale gray underbody.
- White undertail coverts.
- Larger than crow.



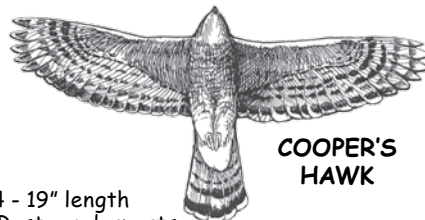
**RED-TAILED HAWK**

- 17 - 22" length
- Unmarked light to red tail.
- Light breast and dark leading edge to wing.
- Streaked, variably dark belly band.



**MERLIN**

- 9 - 12" length
- Banded gray tail.
- Dark-looking underside.
- Streaked body.



**COOPER'S HAWK**

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



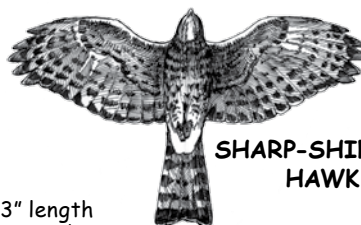
**RED-SHOULDERED HAWK**

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



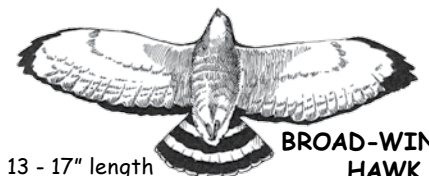
**AMERICAN KESTREL**

- 8 - 11" length
- Tail: rufous-male, barred brown -female
- Light underneath.
- Near size of Blue Jay.



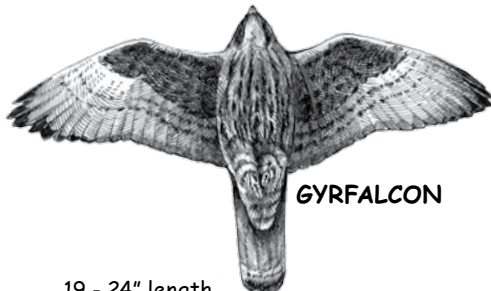
**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK**

- 9 - 13" length
- Rusty underparts.
- Square or notched tail tip.
- Near size of Blue Jay.



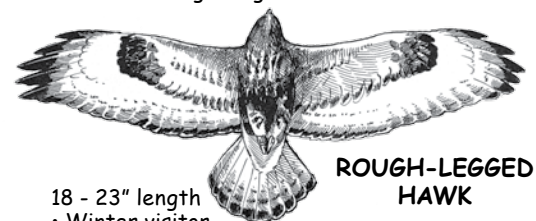
**BROAD-WINGED HAWK**

- 13 - 17" length
- Smallest Buteo, crow size.
- Equal white and black on tail.
- Whitish wing linings.



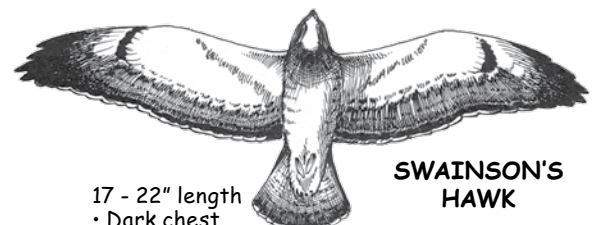
**GYRFALCON**

- 19 - 24" length
- Robust - larger than Peregrine.
- Body uniformly colored-4 color morphs.
- Rare Arctic visitor.



**ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK**

- 18 - 23" length
- Winter visitor.
- Dark belly, wrist patch and terminal tail band.
- Dark morph: body, wing linings solid dark



**SWAINSON'S HAWK**

- 17 - 22" length
- Dark chest.
- Light underwing coverts, dark flights.
- Uncommon western visitor in northeast.



**OSPREY**  
21 - 26" length

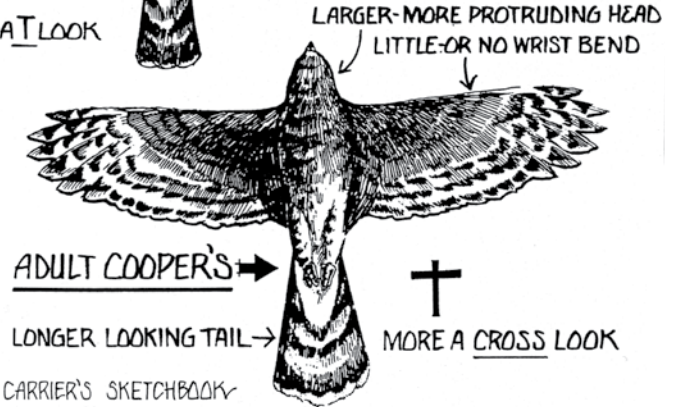
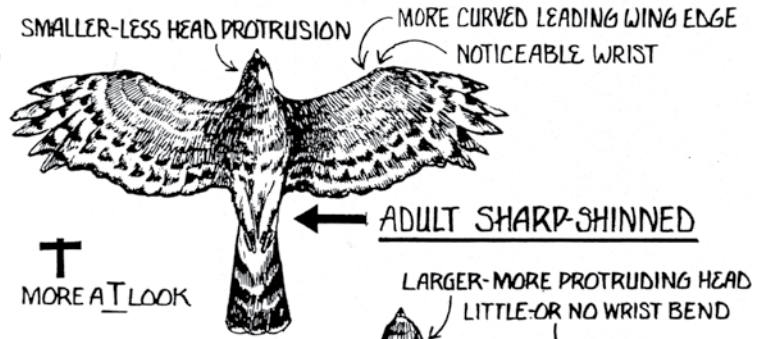
- . Flies with kink (W) in wings.
- . Eagle sized; clean white body.
- . Black wrist marks.



**NORTHERN HARRIER**  
16 - 20" length

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

**SHARP-SHINNED vs COOPER'S**



**WING PROFILE**

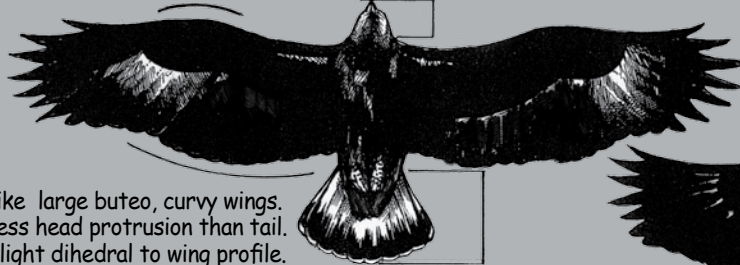


**BALD EAGLE**



**GOLDEN EAGLE**

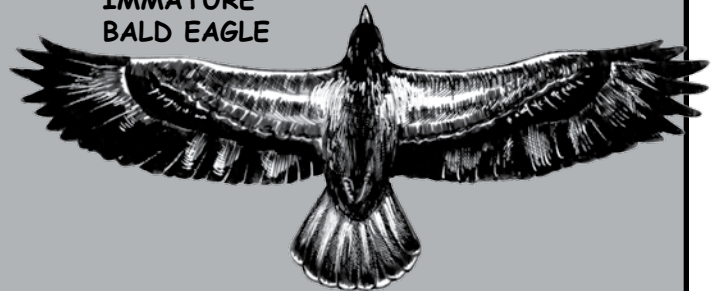
**SUB-ADULT GOLDEN EAGLE**



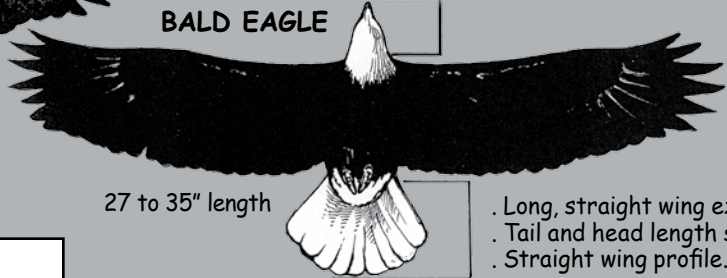
- . Like large buteo, curvy wings.
- . Less head protrusion than tail.
- . Slight dihedral to wing profile.

27 to 35" length

**IMMATURE BALD EAGLE**



**BALD EAGLE**



27 to 35" length

- . Long, straight wing extension.
- . Tail and head length similar.
- . Straight wing profile.



24 to 28" length

**Turkey Vulture**  
. Dark wings with lighter feathers  
. Flies with uplifted wings-V shaped



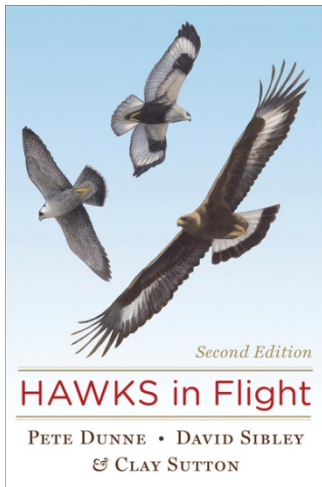
23 to 28" length

**Black Vulture**  
. Wings & tail shorter than TV  
. Whitish tips on wings

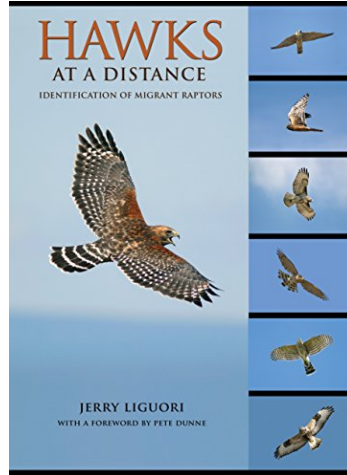
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# Suggested Raptor ID Resources

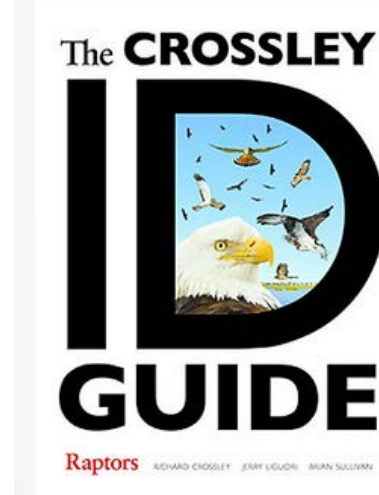
## Books



**Hawks in Flight**  
Pete Dunne, David Sibley  
& Clay Sutton



**Hawks At A Distance**  
Jerry Liguori



**Crossley ID Guide: Raptors**  
Richard Crossley, Jerry Liguori  
& Brian Sullivan

## Online

**www.hawkcount.org** Find hawk watches and access data from hawk counts  
Hawk Migration Association of North America ([www.hmana.org](http://www.hmana.org))

**Hawk ID / Facebook Group** started by Jerry Liguori. Just search Hawk ID in Facebook  
Good learning in comments about hawk pictures posted for ID

**www.hawkwatch.org/factsheets** downloadable raptor ID factsheets by Jerry Liguori

**www.allaboutbirds.org** Cornell Lab of Ornithology web site for quick bio/ID of many NA birds

**birdsoftheworld.org** Birds Of The World comprehensive online reference (subscription)  
constantly updated with new research. Excellent. Cornell Lab.

**www.ebird.org** Access to bird sightings globally. Free account to track sightings.

## App



**Raptor ID**

Android/IOS Hawk Watch International & Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Jerry Liguori & Brian Sullivan