

COOPER'S HAWK

Accipiter cooperii



Length: 14-16 in. (male); 16-19 in. (female)
Weight: 10-14 oz. (male); 17-24 oz. (female)
Wingspan: 28-30 in. (male); 31-34 in. (female)

The Cooper's hawk is a short-winged, long-tailed forest-dwelling raptor. Cooper's hawks closely resemble the smaller sharp-shinned hawk, but can be distinguished by the curved tip of the tail with broad white terminal band compared to the squared tip on the tail of the sharp-shinned hawk. Cooper's hawks have a larger, squared head emphasized by its tendency to raise its hackles. The head projects far beyond wrists on a gliding bird, and they have five notched primaries. Cooper's hawks eyes look smaller in the head than sharp-shinned hawks.

Flight: Active flight with stiff, strong wing beats. Typical flight pattern for accipiters is flap, flap, glide - flap, flap, glide. They will surprise prey with a low, swift dashing flight, and have been known to drown prey with a convulsive grip. It will soar with dihedral or flat wings.

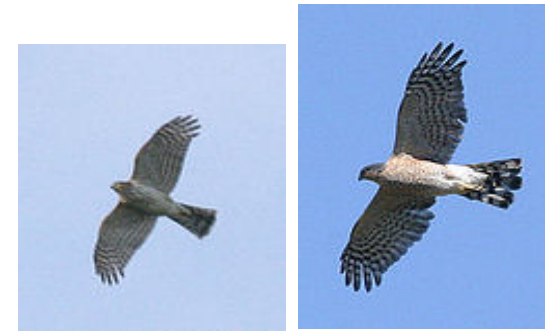
Voice: Around the nest, a rapid kek, kek, kek, suggestive of a flicker.

Cooper's hawks are forest-dwelling raptors. Their preference for forest habitats makes them more difficult to spot, but they will usually soar for a period of time each day. Cooper's hawks are seen in increasing numbers while sharp-shinned hawks are declining due to habitat. Cooper's hawks will nest in fragmented woodlands, while sharp-shinned hawks won't.

Cooper's hawks are common to uncommon in their breeding range, which is most of United States and southern Canada, except southern Florida and northern Great Plains. Northern birds are migratory.

It usually builds a new nest of sticks and twigs each year. Nest is usually lined with flakes of bark and sprigs of green pine needles. Lay 4-5 eggs. Incubation lasts about 30-32 days and is shared by both sexes. Male brings sticks, female arranges nest, in crotch of tree or on top of squirrels nest in dense canopy. Lays eggs every other day but eggs hatched within three days.

Its main food is birds.



Sharp-shinned, left. Coopers, right.

Here are some generally accepted id points

1 - Flight behavior. While flying high and in the open, the Sharp-shinned alternates flapping followed by a "drifty" glide. The wing beats are quick and flicking. The Cooper's wing beats are strong and stiff.

2 - Body shape. The Cooper's head and neck jut well forward of the wings. The Sharp-shinned's head and neck appear to be "pulled in" and its wrist joints are more obvious than those of the Cooper, and seem to be pressed more forward in the bird's soar.

3- Tail shape. The Sharpie's tail is more squared-off than the Cooper's, and the terminal band is more gray than white. The Cooper's tail, conversely, is a bit rounder at the white terminal band is more distinct. (This is most noticeable in the fall and can be worked off by spring)

Cool Facts

- Dashing through vegetation to catch birds is a dangerous lifestyle. In a study of more than 300 Cooper's Hawk skeletons, 23 percent showed old, healed-over fractures in the bones of the chest, especially of the furcula, or wishbone.
- A Cooper's Hawk captures a bird with its feet and kills it by repeated squeezing.
- Once thought averse to towns and cities, Cooper's Hawks are now fairly common urban and suburban birds.
- Life is tricky for male Cooper's Hawks. As in most hawks, males are significantly smaller than their mates. The danger is that female Cooper's Hawks specialize in eating medium-sized birds. Males tend to be submissive to females and to listen out for reassuring call notes the females make when they're willing to be approached. Males build the nest, and then provide nearly all the food to females and young over the next 90 days before the young fledge.
- The oldest known Cooper's Hawk was 20 years, 4 months old.

KOLA WAKON OF WILDLIFE”

Roughly translated it means “Sacred Friend of Wildlife”. This is what every Wildlife Rehabilitator, every person who rescues wildlife, everyone who transports and every Veterinarian that works with wildlife are to the wild kingdom.

In any State, you can call your local Game & Inland Fisheries, local Veterinarian, or animal shelter and they should have some phone numbers for local Wildlife Rehabilitators.

If you have any questions you may call Pearl Beamer, State & Federally licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator within the state of Virginia about wildlife. Pearl specializes in Raptors, Crows and Loons. 757-855-2922 (7am-7pm)



COOPER'S HAWK

Accipiter cooperii