

**TRICKY**  
**IDENTIFICATION:**  
**Sharp-shinned Hawk & Cooper's Hawk**



By: Jeff Anderson

**Adult Sharp-shinned Hawk**



By: Seth Reams

**Adult Cooper's Hawk**

These hawks are common predators at bird feeders. Despite their common occurrences, they pose a significant problem in identifying them for beginners & intermediate birders. There is a great

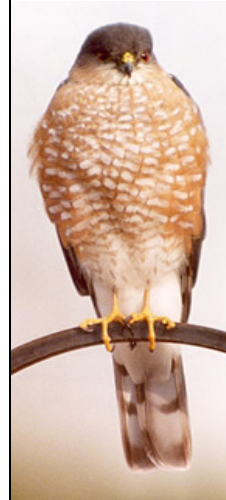
variation in plumage & size for these two species; more so than any other species. No single field mark is likely to distinguish them apart. No field guide will substitute for plenty of practice in the field.

If you observe one in the field and are not sure which species they are just list them as "*Accipiter sp*" (the genus in which these two species are classified).

I am hoping that this brochure will help you in the identification process.



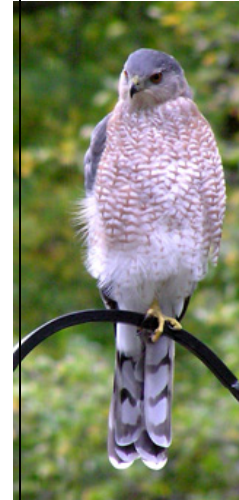
**Juv. Male Cooper's Hawk**



By: Bill Diedrich

**Adult Sharp-shinned Hawk**

- About the size of a **jay or dove** (avg 10-14" long)
- Female appears to be almost as large as a male Cooper's Hawk.
- Tail has a narrow **white tip**. All tail feathers same length.
- Head appears small compared to body.
- Pencil-like legs.
- Feathers on the crown & back of neck are dark, giving it a "**hooded**" look.
- Eyes appear to half way between front & back of head. **Broad chest & narrow hips**, low center of gravity.



By: Ellen Gennich

**Adult Coopers Hawk**

- About the size of a **crow** (avg 14-20" long)
- Male can appear to be the size of a female Sharp-shinned Hawk.
- Tail is **rounded**, middle tail feathers are the longest; tail has a wide **white tip**.
- Head appears large in comparison to body.
- Feathers on head are darker than back of neck; giving a "**capped**" look.
- Eyes appear to be close to front of head. Reddish orange in color.
- **Tubular body**, low center of gravity.
- **Thicker, shorter looking legs** compared to Sharp-shinned Hawk.

**Summary of Identification Tips**

With all plumages, Cooper's Hawks are barrel shaped, with t width of chest fairly close in size with the width of hips, largest portion of the chest about halfway down body. Sharp-Shinnec Hawks the widest is at the shoulder and get distinctly narrower closer to the hips.

Sharp-shinned Hawk' head looks small, and Cooper's Hawk's head looks large. Sharp-shinned Hawks appear short-necked; Cooper's Hawks appear tall.

Cooper's Hawks are larger than Sharp-shinned Hawks but si can be difficult to judge because of the wide range of size from on individual to the next

If a Juvenile hawk, the thickness of color of vertical streaks is fairly reliable. Very thick, rufous stripes the extend down the lower belly for a Sharp-shinned Hawk and very thin dark streaks that fade away on the lower belly for a Cooper's Hawk.

Very thin legs for a Sharp-shinned Hawk and very thick legs for a Cooper's Hawk.

If you can see the back of the head the Cooper's Hawks have a pale nape with a clear contrast to dark cap. Juveniles of both species can show a pale nape.

The tail feathers of a Sharp-shinned hawks are the same length and the Cooper's Hawk outer tail feathers are shorter than the inner ones. A Sharp-shinned hawk's tail can appear to be rounded if spread out and a Cooper's hawk square.

If molting that can cause some identification problems.

### Juvenile Birds

Juvenile Birds of both species have yellow eyes, dark vertical stripes on their breasts and variable brown backs & heads with some white spots.



By: David Smith  
**Juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk**

**Heavy, bold, reddish streaks** on chest & belly.

Usually has a **pale stripe above the eye.**



By: David Smith  
**Juvenile Cooper's Hawk**

**Finer streaks** mostly on upper breast, **lower belly mostly white.**

Often reddish color on side of head & nape.

## “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 might have some phone numbers for local Wildlife Rehabilitators.** <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured/rehabilitators.asp?location=all>

**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. 757-855-2100 (7am-7pm)**

### Sharp-shinned Hawk

*Accipiter striatus*

**&**

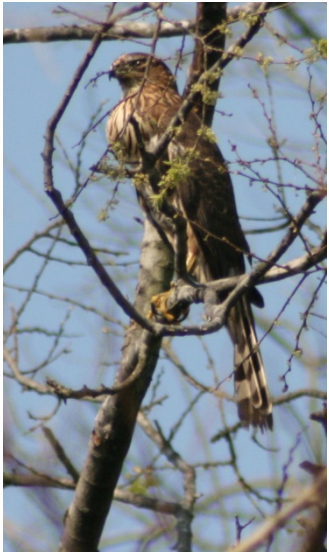
### Cooper's Hawk

*Accipiter cooperii*

## **HOW TO IDENTIFY THOSE TWO BIRDS**



**Adult Sharp-shinned Hawk**



**Juv. Male Cooper's Hawk  
With full crop.**