

Red-tailed Hawk

(Buteo jamaicensis)



Flora
Fauna



How to Identify:

- One of the largest as well as most common hawks in our area.
- Rusty-red tail. You can most easily see this when the hawk is perched.
- Red-tailed Hawks tend to be dark on their back and wings. Their underwings and belly are usually light-colored.
- Many Red-tailed Hawks also have a band of dark streaking across their bellies. Bird watchers call this a belly band.
- Not all Red-tailed Hawks look alike! This species has 16 different varieties, called sub-species. They are found in different parts of North America.

Red-tailed Hawks usually mate for life and will use the same nest many times.

**Explore Idaho
with Scout the Fox!**

Scout



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Habitat:

- Red-tailed Hawks prefer open country habitats with scattered trees or other perches.
- You may see them perched on fence posts or telephone poles along the edge of fields.

Fun Facts!

- Red-tailed hawks are sit-and-wait hunters. They find a tall perch and watch the ground for their prey.
- They feed on small mammals such as voles, mice, rats, gophers, ground squirrels, rabbits and hares. They also eat a lot of small birds and snakes
- The nest is usually built in the top of a tall tree in a wooded area. Sometimes Red-tails will nest on cliffs.
- They are diurnal. This means that they are active during the day. Hawks have hooked beaks used for tearing their food. They have strong legs and feet (talons) that they use for grasping and killing prey.
- Excellent eyesight lets hawks spot their food a mile away! Each eye is shaded by a bony ridge that makes the hawk look mad! Like most predators, hawks have eyes that face forward, like yours. This is called binocular vision, which helps with depth perception. Hawks can also see things off to the side by using their right or left eye by itself. This is called monocular vision. Try out your monocular vision by covering one eye.
- Some Red-tailed Hawks migrate. In winter, we see Red-tailed Hawks from Canada in Idaho.

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Help Protect the Red-tailed Hawk

- Long ago, people thought hawks were bad. They thought hawks would eat livestock. We now know a lot more about hawks and what they really eat. This has helped people understand the important role hawks play in the food web. Hawks are now protected, and most people enjoy the sight of a hawk soaring through the sky.
- Support conservation of natural areas.
- Poisons used to kill rodents can harm Red-tailed Hawks that eat rodents.



Above: Immature Red-tailed Hawk

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ACTIVITY TIME

1. Why do you think Red-tailed Hawks in Canada migrate south to Idaho and other areas for the winter?

2. Why do Red-tailed Hawks need excellent eyesight?



Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

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