



Red-tailed Hawk

(Buteo jamaicensis)

DID YOU KNOW:

Red-tailed Hawks adapt well to different habitats and are extremely versatile in their diet. As a result, they have become the most abundant hawk in North America.

EATING HABITS:

Whatever animal is most abundant and most easily caught will become part of the Red-tailed Hawk's diet. They hunt mice, rats, moles, rabbits, opossums and muskrats. They love ducks, pigeons, songbirds and quail, and they won't pass up a meal of snakes, lizards, frogs or insects. They may even steal prey from a smaller hawk and then catch and include the smaller hawk in the meal.



THE YOUNG:

During courtship, the male and female fly close together. The female may reuse the same nest each year. The nest is about two feet in diameter and built high in a mature tree. The female adds soft greenery to the nest and lays one to three eggs about mid-March. The male brings her food while she is sitting on the nest and then helps her feed the young. The young are able to fly from the nest about six weeks after hatching.

HABITAT (HOME):

Depending on prey available, a Red-tailed Hawk may need about two to three square miles to survive. They prefer mixed forest and farmlands. They need sturdy tall trees for nesting and roosting and open areas to find food.

Red-tailed Hawks are the most common hawk seen along our roadways.



DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Sharp talons and a strong, sharp beak help defend against predators and protect their nesting and hunting territory from other birds of prey. "Eyes like a hawk" isn't an empty compliment. They can see fine details at a great distance. No animal can survive without a home. Hawks have no defense against habitat loss and lack of food.

UNUSUAL FACTS:

- When hunting, the Red-tailed Hawk can appear to fly in place. The hawk faces into the wind and only flicks its wings and tail to hold position as it scans the area for a tasty morsel. This flight skill is called kiting.
- Red-tailed Hawks occur in many color phases. A red-tail's color can range from almost completely black to almost completely buff.
- Immature Red-tailed Hawks have yellow eyes; adults have dark brown eyes. The characteristic red tail develops in the hawk's second year.