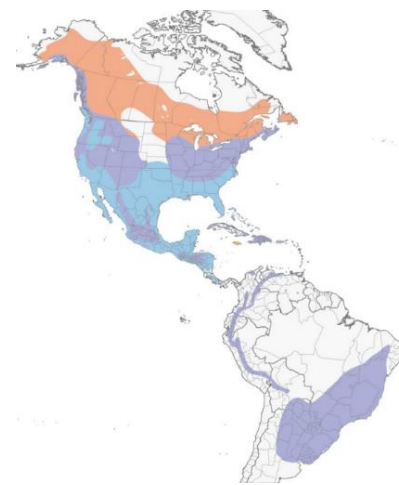


Sharp-shinned Hawk



Classification

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Falconiformes
Family: Accipitridae
Genus: *Accipiter*
Species: *striatus*



Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** Found throughout much of North America, including Mexico. In South America, they are found from Venezuela to northern Argentina. Most of the North American populations migrate to the southern parts of their range in winter. They are also found on some Caribbean islands.
- **Habitat:** Forest and forest edge. Not found where trees are scarce or scattered, except during migration as they require dense forest and a closed canopy for breeding.
- **Conservation Status:** Least Concern

Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** 9.4 to 13.4 inches (24-34 cm)
- **Wingspan:** 16.9 to 22.1 inches (43-56 cm)
- **Weight:** 3.1 to 7.7 ounces (87-218 g)
- **Lifespan:** Average is 3 years in the wild due to predators and collisions with cars and buildings.
- **Identifying Traits:** Adults are blue-gray from above, and pale reddish from below. Juveniles are brown from above and striped from below. Have long legs, short wings, and very long tails proportionally. It is also the smallest hawk species in Canada and the United States. Females are around a third bigger and heavier than males.

Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Songbirds make up about 90% of their diet. They also eat small mammals and large insects. They use the element of surprise to catch prey and short bursts of flight to chase prey items.

- **Breeding:** Late March to June when prey is most abundant and available.
- **Nesting:** The nest is always placed under dense forest cover, usually toward the top of a tall tree, but well under the canopy. Most nests are anchored between horizontal limbs and the tree trunk. Prefer conifer trees such as pine, spruce, and fir, but have also been observed using aspen and hardwood trees. Nests are made up of dead twigs and sometimes lined with flakes of bark. While both the male and female find nesting material, it is the female that does most of the nest construction. Lay 3 to 8 eggs once a year.
- **Migration:** Resident to long distance migrant. In the Appalachians and Western mountains, they typically remain year-round. In northern Canada and the U.S., they may migrate south for the winter as far as southern Central America.
- **Call:** A high-pitched, frantic "kik-kik-kik-kik". Males tend to have a higher pitched call than females due to their smaller size.

Fun Facts!

- They are agile and acrobatic fliers, navigating dense woods at high speeds by using their long tail as a rudder to steer and change direction.
- This species and other accipiters fly with a characteristic "flap-flap-glide" pattern, which is typically 3 to 6 shallow wingbeats followed by a short glide.
- Sharp-shinned Hawks are "pursuit hunters", often surprising their prey on the wing by bursting out from a hidden perch with a rush of speed.
- Sharp-shinned Hawks typically remove and eat the head of their prey before delivering the food item to a mate or young. They also pluck their prey before eating it.
- All North American accipiters, including Sharp-shinned Hawks, have red eyes as adults.
- They are called Sharp-shinned Hawks due to a sharp ridge on the leading edge of their legs.

Importance

- Sharp-shinned Hawks are important members of their ecosystem as they have a regulatory influence on local small bird populations, including invasive songbird species.

Sources

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- <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/sharp-shinned-hawk>



- https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Accipiter_striatus/
- <https://hawkwatch.org/raptor-id/raptor-id-fact-sheets/sharp-shinned-hawk/>
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