

# Harris's Hawk



## Classification

**Kingdom:** Animalia  
**Phylum:** Chordata  
**Class:** Aves  
**Order:** Accipitriformes  
**Family:** Accipitridae  
**Genus:** *Parabuteo*  
**Species:** *unicinctus*



## Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** Northern limit is the southwestern United States, including portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Kansas and south-central Texas. Range continues south from there into Mexico, through Central America, and into parts of South America.
- **Habitat:** River woods, mesquite, brush, cactus deserts. Found mostly in open dry country.
- **Conservation Status:** Least Concern

## Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** 18.1 to 23.2 inches (46-59 cm)
- **Wingspan:** 40.5 to 46.9 inches (103-119 cm)
- **Weight:** 18.2 to 31.0 ounces (515-880 g)
- **Lifespan:** Up to 15 years in the wild. The oldest known individual under human care was 33 years old.
- **Identifying Traits:** Dark brown overall with reddish brown feathers on the wings and thighs. The tail is mostly dark with a white rump and white terminal band. From below, the inner wings are reddish brown.

## Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Feed mostly on small prey. They eat mammals, such as rats, but also take birds, such as pigeons, and snakes and lizards.
- **Breeding:** Females have the ability to breed all year long and can lay two to three clutches within a year.
- **Nesting:** Harris's Hawk families will sometimes nest together. Though a single male and a single female can and often do raise their young together, some individual families engage in a behavior that scientists call "polyandry." This occurs when one female and usually two males work

together to raise and care for their young. In the case of Harris's Hawks, perhaps five or six birds will all help to raise one pair's young. These extra birds are usually the young of the same pair that hatched in previous years.

- **Migration:** Non-Migratory
- **Call:** A low, harsh hissing sound.

## Resident Bird(s)

**Name:** Cody

- **Age:** Hatched in 1998 or earlier
- **Sex:** Male
- **Background:** Unknown
- **Unique Individual Traits:** Though his loud, gruff call might make him sound a little grumpy, it's just his way of chatting!

## Fun Facts!

- Unlike most raptor species, the Harris's Hawk is an extremely social bird and though it can be seen by itself or with another hawk, it often hangs out in small family groups. As a family should, they hunt together, help keep watch for predators together (and signal an alarm call if one is seen), and even work together to help raise young.
- Harris's Hawks can hunt in groups. These family groups chase prey as large as hares, taking turns running their quarry to exhaustion. Alternatively, if the prey hides under a bush, one hawk flushes the prey while the others wait in a circle to pounce on it as it emerges.
- Groups are more successful at capturing prey than individuals that hunt alone even leading to higher survival rates for groups with more than two members.

## Importance

- Harris's Hawks are important predators in their ecosystem, controlling populations of many small mammal species.

## Sources

- [https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Parabuteo\\_unicinctus/](https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Parabuteo_unicinctus/)
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- <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/harriss-hawk>
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