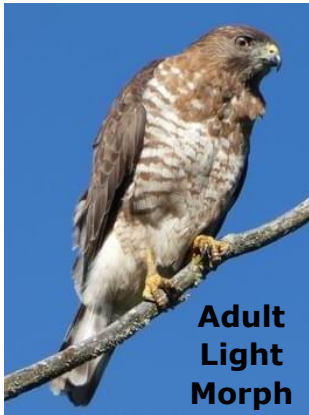
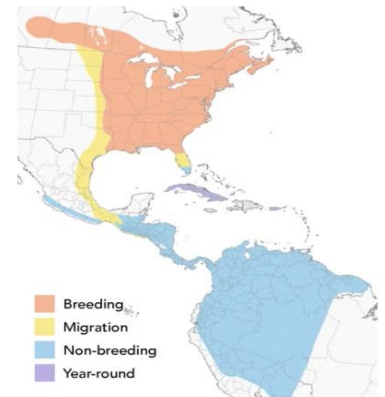


Broad-winged Hawk



Classification
Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Accipitriformes
Family: Accipitridae
Genus: *Buteo*
Species: *platypterus*



Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** Breed in large deciduous or mixed forests throughout the eastern U.S. and southern Canada. Winter in forests and along the edges of forests from southern Mexico to Brazil and Bolivia. Some subspecies are found year-round in the Caribbean islands.
- **Habitat:** Nest near forest openings and bodies of water far away from human activity and disturbances. Live in forests and spend most of the time underneath the canopy. During migration, they soar along coastlines and mountain ridges in very large flocks.
- **Conservation Status:** Low Concern except for the Puerto Rican subspecies, which is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Habitat destruction is the largest threat to this species.

Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** 13.4 to 17.3 inches (34-44 cm)
- **Wingspan:** 31.9 to 39.4 inches (81-100 cm)
- **Weight:** 0.6 to 1.2 pounds (265-560 grams)
- **Lifespan:** On average 12 years in the wild, but the oldest individual recorded in the wild was over 18 years old.
- **Identifying Traits:** Small, stocky raptor with large head and chunky body. The tail is rounded, medium to short in length and barred with one thick white base in the middle and a thinner white band near the base and the tail tip. While in flight, their broad wings come to a distinct point. Adults have reddish-brown heads, barred underparts, and pale undersides in both wing linings and flight feathers. Wings are bordered with a dark brown edge. A rare dark morph mainly seen in the western portion of its range is completely dark sooty brown with a banded tail.

Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Hunt small animals, such as mammals, amphibians, and insects, from perches underneath the forest canopy. Swoop down to catch prey from the forest floor.
- **Breeding:** Will start breeding around 2 years of age. Soar above the canopy during the breeding season, most likely due to territorial defense. Will circle high in the air then plummet toward the ground in a sky-dance display when courting. Some pairs will breed multiple years in a row while others find new mates each year.
- **Nesting:** Nest in the lower third of the canopy in many species of deciduous and coniferous trees, such as white oak, trembling aspen, red pine, white pine, white birch, yellow birch, and European larch. Typically use the first main crotch of a deciduous tree or a platform or horizontal branches against the trunk of a coniferous tree. Will reuse nests from previous years or renovate nests that other bird species have created.
- **Clutch size** is 1 to 5 eggs, which incubate for 28 to 31 days, and then the nestling period is 35 to 42 days.
- **Migration:** Migrate over long distances in large flocks called “kettles”. Take advantage of thermal air currents to soar. During fall migration, they pass through the northern and western shores of the Great Lakes and then turn southwest and travel along the Gulf of Mexico. Spring migrations are more dispersed, but they tend to concentrate along the southern shores of the Great lakes and into southern Texas. A few subspecies stay year-round on the Caribbean islands.
- **Call:** A piercing, two-part whistle that sounds like “kee-ee” or “peeoweee”.

Fun Facts!

- During the fall, hundreds of thousands of Broad-winged Hawks will migrate from the Northern forests of South America. These flocks can contain thousands of birds at a time called “kettles”.
- Satellite transmitters were used by scientists to track Broad-winged Hawks while migrating, and they found that the hawks migrated on average 4,359 miles in total while traveling on average 69 miles per day. In comparison, these hawks stayed on average within a one-square mile area during the wintering months.
- It can take two months or more to complete the migration route encompassing 1,800 to 3,800 miles.
- Late Pleistocene fossils have been found in Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Virginia, and Puerto Rico. These fossils are up to 400,000 years old.
- They leave the northern parts of their range in early August and therefore are one of the earliest raptor species to begin migrating each year.

Importance

Broad-winged Hawks feed on insect and rodent species that may be considered pests by some humans. They also provide food for their predators, which include raccoons, porcupines, American crows, black bears, and great horned owls.

Threats and Conservation Measures

While conservation status is of least concern, numbers are declining in the Northeastern US. The main cause is large forest fragmentation into smaller forests due to suburban development, road construction and energy infrastructure. In smaller forests, nests are more susceptible to predation. Conservation measures involve monitoring populations, and preserving forests, in particular mature heritage trees. Other threats include car collisions and pesticide exposure. To prevent car collisions, visitors can help by refraining from throwing food items out car window as this attracts prey, such as rodents, to the side of the road (<https://carolinaraptorcenter.org/raptor-hospital/>).

Sources

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