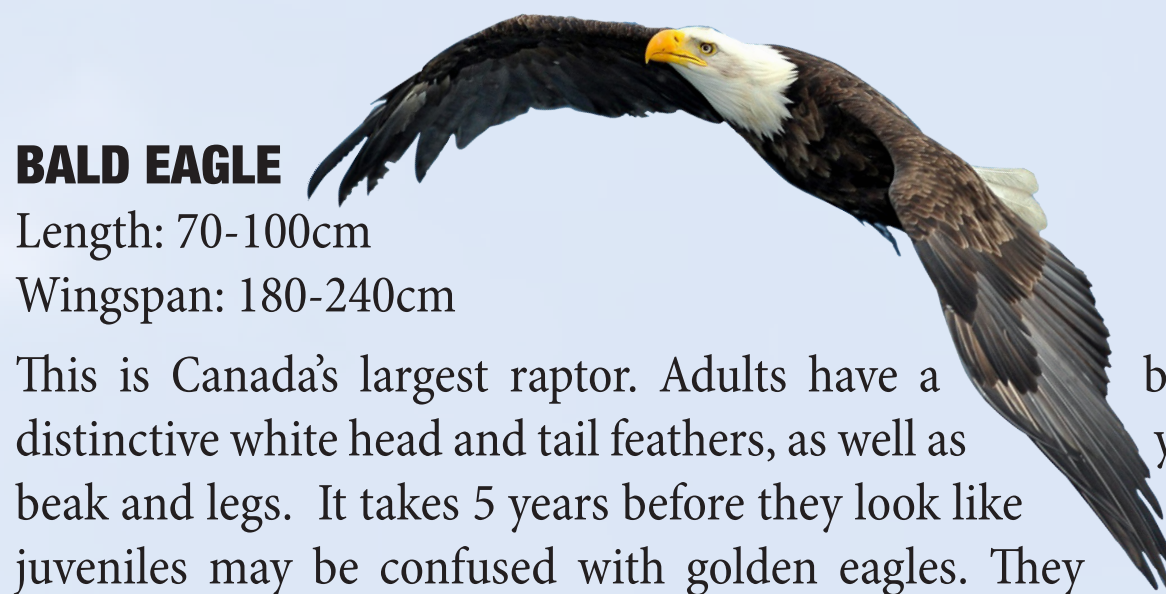


EAGLES

Eagles are larger and more powerful than other hawks and have a heavier head and beak. They fly with a series of strong wing beats followed by intermittent soaring.



BALD EAGLE
Length: 70-100cm
Wingspan: 180-240cm

This is Canada's largest raptor. Adults have a brown body, distinctive white head and tail feathers, as well as yellow eyes, beak and legs. It takes 5 years before they look like adults, so juveniles may be confused with golden eagles. They usually live near the coast or lakeshore because they eat fish, aquatic birds and mammals. They steal from other birds and scavenge carrion if necessary. Many congregate at coastal salmon runs for the winter. Nests are up to 2m across and 1m high, built in the tallest of trees.



GOLDEN EAGLE
Length: 70-85cm
Wingspan: 175-220cm

Only slightly smaller than the bald eagle, adults are dark brown with golden feathers on the head and neck. Unlike most raptors, their legs are feathered all the way to the toes. Juveniles have white patches on the tail and wings. They live in mountainous regions and open grasslands where they search for small to medium-sized mammals. Several large stick nests are built on cliff edges and sometimes in trees. Pairs mate for life and alternate nests each year.

HARRIERS

Harriers have long narrow wings and tails and fly slowly low over ground. They fly with wings in a sharp dihedral (deep V-shape).

NORTHERN HARRIER
Length: 45-50cm
Wingspan: 100-120cm

Males are white below with a light gray back, and the female is mottled in browns. Sometimes called a "marsh hawk," it is found in open grasslands and wetland areas. It eats small mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs. Unlike other hawks, it relies on its hearing as well as its vision to capture prey. Feathers on its face form a facial disk, much like that of an owl, to transmit sound. Some males pair with up to five females in a season. The nest is a platform of vegetation on the ground. They migrate south in the winter.



FALCONS

Falcons have small heads, compact bodies and long tapered wings. They fly at high speeds with quick powerful wing strokes and change direction quickly. Unlike most raptors, females usually look different than males.



AMERICAN KESTREL
Length: 20-30cm
Wingspan: 50-60cm

This small but colourful raptor has a bluish-grey crown, reddish back and tail and two dark lines on its face. They live in open regions where there is an abundance of insects, mice, voles, snakes and small birds to eat. Females migrate south before males and claim the best territory. Males return to breeding grounds first. They prefer to nest in natural cavities like woodpecker holes. Nestlings squirt their feces on the nest walls where it dries. This keeps the nestlings clean, but doesn't do much for the smell!

MERLIN
Length: 25-30cm
Wingspan: 55-70cm

Merlins were previously known as "pigeon hawks" because they fly like a pigeon. They are the least well marked of all falcons. They do not dive, but fly fast and low, using trees to take prey by surprise. Merlins mostly eat small birds, though insects, voles and reptiles complement the diet. Breeding pairs hunt cooperatively, with one bird flushing the prey towards the other. Pairs remain monogamous for at least one breeding season. Merlins do not build their own nests, but take over old ones from other raptors.



PRAIRIE FALCON
Length: 35-45cm
Wingspan: 90-115cm

This crow-sized falcon is easily recognized in flight by dark wing-pits. They live in dry, open country and eat medium-sized mammals and birds caught in flight. Pairs make nests on cliff ledges with overhangs for shade and water nearby. As is typical with falcons, females do most of the incubating and males bring most of the food. Migration begins in late August and spring migrants start arriving in late March.

PEREGRINE FALCON
Length: 35-50cm
Wingspan: 100-110cm

Females and males look alike with a blue-grey back and black head and moustache. Peregrine means "wanderer", a name they earned for long migrations. They are the fastest of all animals, reaching speeds of up to 320km/hr. Because the air pressure of such speeds could damage their lungs, small bones on their nostrils guide the airflow away from the nostrils, allowing the bird to breathe more easily. They eat mostly medium-sized birds, which they strike from the air with their feet. Peregrines nest on cliff edges and sometimes on buildings.



Conservation Through Rehabilitation & Education

Facts about Hawks What makes a hawk a hawk?

"Hawk" is a general term for birds of prey that are diurnal, meaning they are active during the day. They are classified in the order of Falconiformes, of which there are 304 worldwide and 17 in British Columbia. All hawks are strong and powerful, with good eyesight, hooked beaks and taloned feet, but there is a wide diversity of forms and sizes among them.

STRONG BEAK - Raptors have sharp, hook-shaped beaks to tear the flesh from their prey. On their upper beak, falcons have a "tomial tooth", a pointy triangle which helps bite through the neck of prey.

SHARP TALONS - Raptors have long sharp talons to grab and tear prey. Talons are made of keratin, the same as human fingernails. Raptors' toe pads are sensitive and tell the bird when it's time to clamp shut.

SIZE - Hawks are unusual in that the females are larger than males. An extreme example is the female sharp-shinned hawk, which is twice as big as the male. Vultures are the exception where males are 10-15% larger than females.

EYES LIKE A HAWK - Hawks have excellent vision for hunting and avoiding danger. Their eyes are larger and have more sensory cells (rods and cones) in the retina, compared to other animals. Like humans, they have binocular vision, meaning they use both eyes to see, which gives better depth perception. They also see in colour and have a third, clear eyelid for protection. A hawk's vision is the best in the animal world and is up to eight times better than humans.

HEARING - Hawks have good hearing, but not as good as owls. Their ears are small holes below the eyes and are covered in feathers.

SMELL - Most raptors are not sensitive to smell. An exception is the turkey vulture, which uses its keen sense of smell to find carrion.

CROP - Unlike owls, whose food goes directly to the stomach, hawks have a storage area, called a crop. Food can be held there for later digestion. It allows them to eat quickly and limit exposure to predators. It's also a stopping-point for indigestible bits like fur and bones. These pieces are formed into an oval pellet and regurgitated.

COURTING DISPLAYS - Hawks are known for amazing aerial displays to find a new mate or for bonding between an established pair. Individuals will do high-speed dives, head bows, repeated calls, figure eights and circles. Pairs can be seen chasing, passing food and locking talons and cartwheeling towards the ground until the last minute.

ACCIPITERS

Accipiters are sometimes called "true hawks". They are small to medium-sized raptors with short, wide wings and a long tail. They fly with 4-5 quick wing beats followed by a short glide.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK
Length: 25-35cm
Wingspan: 45-55cm

This small bird is named for its pencil-thin legs. It has a blue-grey back and wings and reddish barring on underparts. The tail is long, barred and has a square tip. Young accipiters look completely different than adults with brown above and heavy brown streaks below. Living in coniferous forests, it nests in mature trees against the trunk where it is shaded from above. Large numbers can be seen migrating south in the fall. They prey primarily on small birds, occasionally on large insects and small mammals. Watch for them at bird feeders, eating birds, not seeds.



COOPER'S HAWK
Length: 35-45cm
Wingspan: 60-90cm

Similar to a crow in size, they look like a larger version of a sharp-shinned hawk but with a larger head, thicker legs and rounded tip of the tail. Males build a cup-shaped nest next to the trunk of a large tree. They are territorial and are aggressive towards other raptors. Their main prey is medium-sized birds, and occasional small mammals. Living in forested areas and darting after prey can be dangerous - many have been found with fractured bones.



NORTHERN GOSHAWK
Length: 50-65cm
Wingspan: 100-115cm

This is BC's largest accipiter. Its name comes from the old English words for "goose hawk" because it will attack large birds. They have a distinctive white eyebrow stripe. These secretive birds live in mature forests. The young birds migrate but older birds remain unless prey is scarce. They are known to be persistent while hunting birds, squirrels and hares. Goshawks build a nest that looks like a bowl of thin sticks in a mature tree and they defend it fiercely.



BUTEOS

Buteos are medium-sized raptors with broad rounded wings and a short, wide tail. They fly with slow, deliberate wing beats and are likely to be seen soaring and circling in the air.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK
Length: 45-50cm
Wingspan: 130-140cm

These hawks can have a dark and light form, but both have a dark band on the tip of a white tail, black marks at the wrists and a dark wing edge. They spend summers in northern Canada and migrate to southern BC and the USA in winter. As an adaptation to its cold home range, its legs are feathered to its toes. Bulky stick nests are built on cliffs. The number of eggs laid depends on the availability of prey - mainly small rodents. They hover on wind currents in open areas searching for food.



SWAINSON'S HAWK
Length: 50-55cm
Wingspan: 120-135cm

This medium-sized hawk has a light chest with a dark bib and white throat. Its tail has several narrow bands and one wider band near the tip. Nests are low in a tree or bush. Known as the "grasshopper hawk", they eat small mammals in summer and hop along the ground in search of insects during migration and winter. Large flocks migrate an astonishing 10,000km to South America and make the trip in less than two months (200km per day).



RED-TAILED HAWK
Length: 45-65cm
Wingspan: 115-145cm

This is the most common hawk in North America and is easily identified by its brick-red tail. They can be found in almost any open area where they eat small mammals, birds and reptiles. They attack in a slow, controlled dive with legs outstretched - very different than a falcon's method. Nests are built in tall trees or on cliff ledges. Mated pairs usually stay together until one of them dies. The call is a raspy scream that sounds like a steam kettle - it is often used in movie soundtracks, even for other species.



FERRUGINOUS HAWK
Length: 55-70cm
Wingspan: 130-140cm

This bird is rare in B.C. and is so large it is often confused with an eagle. They have a white breast and body. Ferruginous means "rusty colour" and refers to the bird's back and legs. It is one of the few birds to have legs feathered down to the toes. They live in open areas and hunt primarily for ground squirrels. These hawks are unusual nesters - they can be found in trees, on cliffs or



OSPREY

Ospreys have narrow angled wings great for diving. Their feet and claws are so unique they are classified in their own subfamily.

OSPREY
Length: 55-65cm
Wingspan: 150-180cm

Ospreys have white under parts and four "finger" feathers at the end of each wing. They are adapted to eating fish almost exclusively. Their toes are of equal length, and similar to owls, the outer toe is reversible so they have two pointing forward and two backward for a good grip. Barbed pads on the feet help to hold slippery fish. Ospreys migrate south to open waters in the fall. They build multiple nests in trees and on platforms near water.



VULTURES

Vultures are unlike other raptors because they do not kill their own prey, but instead rely on scavenging carcasses. They fly with their wings in a dihedral (V-shape) and often tip from side to side.

TURKEY VULTURE
Length: 65-80cm
Wingspan: 170-180cm

The turkey vulture is known for its featherless red face. Its baldhead stays cleaner than feathers when inserting it into a carcass. They have a keen sense of smell to find carrion, but they occasionally eat insects and fruit as well. Unlike other raptors, their feet are flat, relatively weak, and poorly adapted to grasping. Its habitat is in meadows and forests where it roosts communally. Eggs are placed directly on the ground in caves, crevices and hollow logs. Its primary defense is to regurgitate semi-digested meat, which deters most creatures intent on raiding a nest.



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