

# RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

*Buteo lineatus*



Red-shouldered hawk favors woodlands near water. It is perhaps the most vocal American hawk. Development by humans tends to decrease habitat for red-shouldered hawks and create open areas preferred by red-tails. They are more difficult to spot perched lower in trees; in winter they perch in the open more often.

Adult's breast is rufous with fine horizontal barring; tail is black with 3-4 narrow white bands. Immature's breast is light with dark brown vertical streaking; tail is dark brown with many fine light brown bands. Iris darkens with age and cere becomes less greenish and more yellow. They have four notched primaries.

They are 15-19 inches tall, weigh 17.27 to 27.32 ounces and wingspan of 37-42 inches. Female is larger than male.

Active flight is accipiter-like with 3-5 quick, stiff shallow wing beats, then a period of glide. They soar with wingtips slightly drooping, and do not hover.

They make their nest of sticks, often returning to the same territory for many years. They usually construct a new nest each year but may refurbish a nest from several years ago. They build their nests lower than the re-tailed hawk, at about half way up the tree. Often line nest with greenery. They lay 2-4 eggs; incubation is about 33 days and is shared by both sexes. Young fledge in 5-6 weeks. Red-shouldered hawk breed at 2 years, nest usually spaced .67 to 1.3 miles apart along rivers.

The young Red-shouldered Hawks look like a lot of other Buteo young, with generally brown plumage on the back, head, and wings, and a creamy white breast and belly heavily marked with dark brown spots. The young do not develop the characteristic adult plumage, black-and-white checkered wings, black-and-white striped tail, and rusty reddish shoulders and breast, until they reach autumn of their second year. They generally begin breeding during their first spring in adult plumage, when they are nearly two years old.

They eat a varied diet ranging from small mammals, birds, frogs, and toads, snakes and lizards.



## COOL FACTS

- Although the American Crow often mobs the Red-shouldered Hawk, sometimes the relationship is not so one-sided. They may chase each other and try to steal food from each other.
- By the time they are five days old, nestlings can shoot their feces over the edge of their nest. Bird poop on the ground is a sign of an active nest.
- The Great Horned Owl often takes the nestling.

**In any State, you can call your local Game & Inland Fisheries, local Veterinarian, or animal shelter and they should have some phone numbers for local Wildlife Rehabilitators.**

**If you have any questions you may call Pearl Beamer, State & Federally licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator within the state of Virginia about wildlife. Pearl specializes in Raptors. 757-855-2922 (7am-7pm)**

## **“KOLA WAKON OF WILDLIFE”**

Roughly translated it means “Sacred Friend of Wildlife”. This is what every Wildlife Rehabilitator, every person who rescues wildlife, everyone who transports and every Veterinarian that works with wildlife are to the wild kingdom.

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