



STILLMAN NATURE CENTER

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RED-SHOULDERED HAWK (*BUTEO LINEATUS*)



Photo by Karen Lund

Identifying Marks: Wingspan 36 - 50 inches; length 18 - 24 inches. Note the robin-red chest plus the black tail with narrow white bands. When soaring overhead, look for the diagnostic “windows” (crescent-shaped translucent patches) located just inside each of the wing-tips.

Habitat: Year-round resident in deciduous lowland forests across the eastern half of the country. Only northernmost populations migrate.

Nest: Usually built more than halfway up a large deciduous tree in a crotch of the main trunk. Nest is often located near some form of water such as a stream, pond, or swamp.

Diet: Mice, chipmunks, frogs, toads, snakes, large insects, small birds, and crayfish.

Voice: A repeated screaming *kee-aah* or *kee-wee* are the most common calls. The drawn-out second syllable ends with a downward inflection. Blue jays often imitate this hawk’s call.

Comments: Like Stillman’s other raptors, this hawk cannot be released. It has a permanently injured wing.

Bottomland Buteos



Photo by Daniel Simpson

Forest Hawks

Both the broad-winged (*Buteo platypterus*) and red-shouldered hawks are forest dwelling hawks belonging to the *Buteo* genus. Competition is kept to a minimum by dividing the forest habitat. Broad-wings prefer upland parcels while red-shouldered hawks hunt mice and chipmunks along moist river bottoms and wooded swamps.

Indicator Species

If a forest is thinned, it will no longer be attractive to a red-shouldered hawk. The less particular and more common red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) will move in. In the eastern U.S., red-shouldered hawks prefer large tracts of woodland where, for the most part, the crowns of adjacent trees touch one another.

Your Neck of the Woods

Should you own property that includes riparian (aka stream bank) habitat, remember red-shouldered hawks especially if you are considering removing some trees. If the trees remain, you will not only be providing a possible nest site for the hawks but also protecting habitat for forest wildflowers such as trout lily and white trillium.



Red-shouldered hawk on nest in wooded habitat.