

Cooper's Hawk

Accipiter cooperii

Description

The Cooper's hawk is a medium-sized hawk, typically 15-20 inches long with a wingspan of 24-35 inches. It features a long, rounded tail with grey and black bars, red eyes, and yellow legs. Its back and wings are greyish-brown, while its breast and belly are white with reddish-brown streaks. Males and females look similar, though females can be larger.

During courtship, which may last up to a month, the male Cooper's hawk pairs with the female. Both build a nest in a tree 20-50 feet high, constructing an open bowl of sticks and twigs lined with bark and vegetation.

Cooper's hawks live in mature forest, open woodlands, wood edges, river groves. They are increasingly found in suburbs and cities where some tall trees exist for nest sites. In winter they may be in fairly open country.

FUN FACTS

- In the mid-20th century, their population plummeted due to DDT pesticide contamination. (thinned eggshells led to widespread nesting failures)
- Cooper's hawks hunt by stealth, approaching its prey through dense cover and then pouncing with a rapid, powerful flight
- They may drown prey by holding it underwater.
- Cooper's hawks primarily prey on medium-sized birds and small mammals.

If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at 403-214-1312, for tips, instructions and advice.

