

Species Sheets: Cooper's Hawk



photo by Kate Davis ©

Common name: Coopers Hawk

Latin Name: *Accipiter cooperii*

Field Marks: Length 14-20 inches
Wing span 29-37 inches



Our medium-sized accipiter, with short wings and a long rounded tail and squared off head. The larger females may be the size of a crow, and both sexes are colored like their smaller relative, the Sharp-shinned Hawk. Young of the year are brown. Flies with several hurried beats followed by brief glide. Males show off their bright white undertail feathers in courtship displays in the spring. Yellow eyes becomes orange then deeper red with age.

Habitat:

Deciduous and coniferous woodlands, usually near water.

Behavior:

Feeds mostly on birds and small mammals. Sits quietly, hidden in tree limbs and leaves, dashes out in quick short flights. Very maneuverable in dense foliage. May fly along fence rows to surprise prey. Very energetic in chasing prey even on foot in the brush and even down burrows. Smaller male tends to catch the smaller more numerous birds close to the nest to feed female and young. Later in nesting female may travel farther to find larger birds. May locate quail by listening for their call.

Nest and eggs:

Large stick nest built by both sexes in the crotch of limbs at tree trunk. 20 to 60 feet high. Always lined with wood chips and bark flakes, and usually with green leaves. 4-6 eggs, incubated mostly by female. Young hatch at around 32 days and fledge, or leave the nest, after a month.

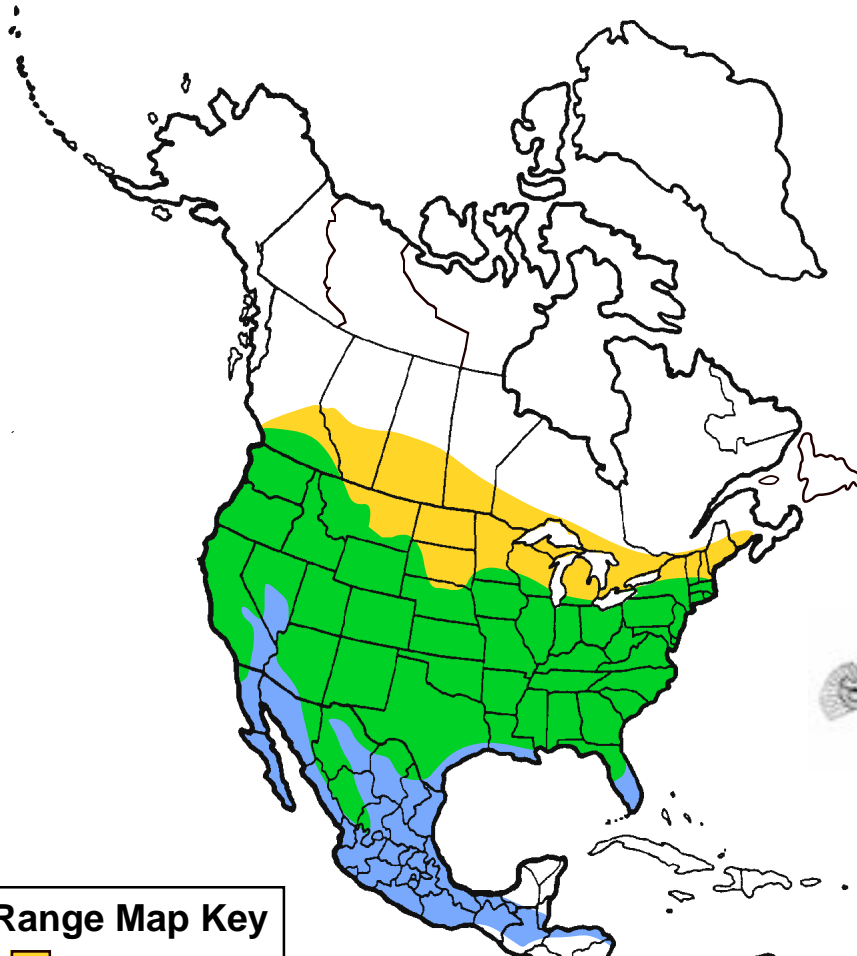
Movement:

Northernmost birds migrate, though many are sedentary, or stay put. May simply move in to lower altitudes for winter. In autumn females, both young and old, migrate before males. Males return first in spring.

Interesting Fact:

Earlier this century these birds were considered vermin, or pests and were killed in great numbers. A bounty was even offered and hunters were given money for killing these "chicken hawks". Their carcasses were tacked on barns and spread on fences to "teach other hawks a lesson." Today, these birds, as with all native bird species are very much protected by state and federal laws.

Range Map: Cooper's Hawk



Cooper's Hawk. Copyright © Kate Davis

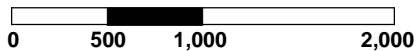


These maps are designed to show the general limits of occurrence. Within those limits, each species will likely be found only in appropriate habitat.

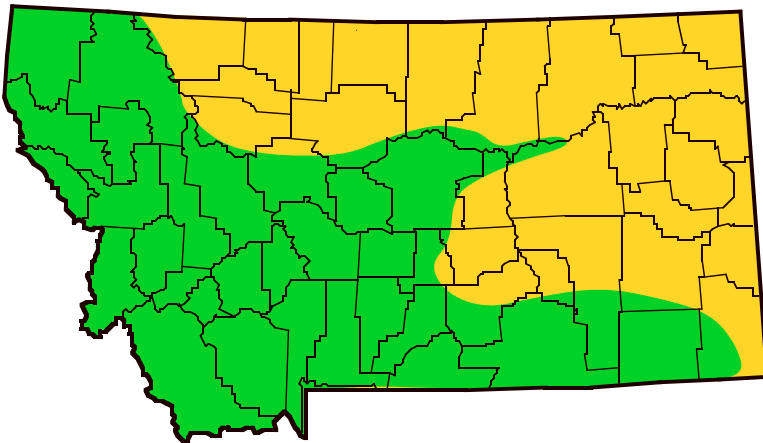
Range Map Key

-  Summer
-  Year-round
-  Winter

scale: 1 inch = 1,000 miles



Raptor Range in Montana



Montana range maps are based on the Montana Bird Distribution data.