

# S.E. MICHIGAN BIRDS of PREY

# RAPTORS ID HOW TO START IDENTIFYING

Many times, the best way to identify a Raptor is by its silhouette. Each species has a distinctive shape.

**HOW BIG IS IT?** Size is difficult to determine at a distance, but it can help. Sizes range from eagles, with 8 foot wingspans, to small falcons with a 20 inch wing span.

**WHAT SHAPE ARE THE WINGS?** Different groups of birds have different shaped wings. Falcons have pointed wings, Accipiters have short rounded wings, and Buteos have long, broad wings.

**HOW LONG IS THE TAIL?** Accipiters and Falcons have longer tails than Buteos.

**HOW DOES IT FLAP IT'S WINGS?** Study the birds wing beats. Larger birds tend to flap slower than smaller birds. Also, different birds have a characteristic "wing snap", posture, or flapping cadence that helps to identify them.

**WHAT PATTERNS AND COLORS DO YOU SEE?** Most raptors are made up of brown and gray colors, but some have distinctive contrasting markings, and in some cases, very distinctive colors.

## ACCIPITERS

1. Goshawk
2. Coopers Hawk
3. Sharp-shinned Hawk

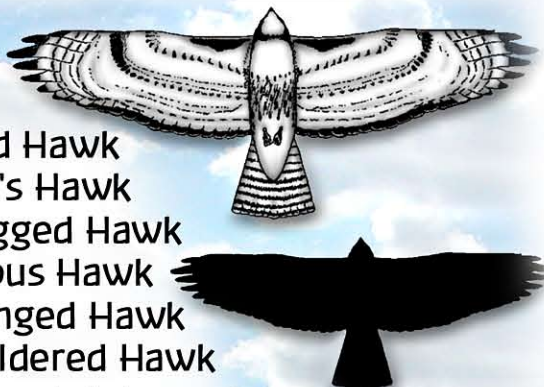
Short, round wings and long tails. They alternate between flapping and gliding.



## BUTEOS

1. Red-tailed Hawk
2. Swainson's Hawk
3. Rough-legged Hawk
4. Ferruginous Hawk
5. Broad-winged Hawk
6. Red-shouldered Hawk

Soars with rounded wings and short, fan-like tails.



## EAGLES

1. Bald Eagle
2. Golden Eagle

Eagles are very large with long broad wings. (up to an 8' wing-span) They are not likely to be mistaken for a Hawk.



## FALCONS

1. Gyrfalcon
2. Merlin
3. Prarie Falcon
4. American Kestrel
5. Peregrine Falcon

Long tails, long pointy wings. Falcons are usually powerful flyers.



## OSPREYS

1. Osprey

Ospreys have long crooked wings (6' wing-span) and is often mistaken for a Gull. It eats fish.



## VULTURES

1. Turkey Vulture

Vultures are large, dark birds with long tails and small pinkish colored heads. The wings are held up in a "V" shape.



## HARRIERS

1. Northern Harrier

Harriers are noted for their long thin wings. (often held up in a "V") and their long tails.

