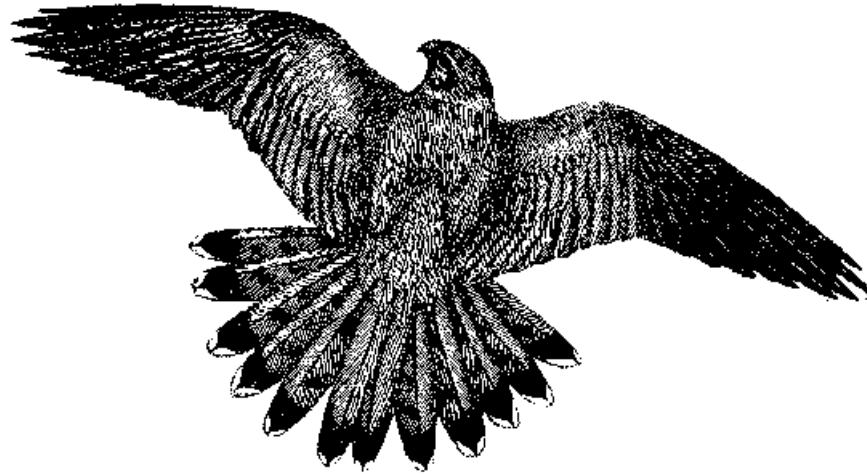


# Broad-winged Hawk

Scientific Name: *Buteo platypterus*



## Did You Know?

- They are considered to be one of the most common hawks in North America, with approximately one million birds making up the North American population.
- This eastern species is the most gregarious of all of the migratory raptors. Flocks of several hundred thousand birds form each year and move in one or two waves down the Eastern Flyways before joining into one huge flock along the Gulf Coast of Texas.
- The Broad-winged Hawk tends to be inconspicuous when nesting but very obvious during migration. It is one of the few raptors of North America that migrates in flocks, and at the peak of migration, kettles (i.e. to fly in groups using thermals) can number tens of thousands of individuals. Sometimes the flocks contain other raptors.
- One of the earliest species to initiate migration, Broad-winged Hawks leave the northern parts of their range in early August. The birds don't often feed during migration, and the main factors influencing their movement through the entire eastern United States are weather patterns. The largest movements of birds take place just after the passage of cold fronts.
- A Broad-winged Hawk swoops down to catch its prey – mammals (which are eaten whole), frogs and snakes (which are skinned), and birds (which are plucked).
- The Broad-winged Hawk pair-bonds can possibly last for more than a year; however, some individuals have been observed to have different mates in between years.

# Chattahoochee NATURE CENTER

# General Information on Broad-winged Hawk

## IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

A very small buteo (any of various broad-winged, soaring hawks of the genus *Buteo*), the Broad-winged Hawk has a dark brown back and a light breast and belly. The adult has reddish horizontal barring underneath while the immature bird's barring runs vertically and is browner. The tail of the adult is brown to gray with broad white stripes, and the immature bird's tail is brown with a light-black terminal band. In all ages the sexes look alike.

## RANGE

The broad-winged is a hawk of eastern deciduous woodlands and is not found west of the Rocky Mountains. Its range extends in the north from Alberta east to Nova Scotia, south through North Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa to eastern Texas, through the Gulf Coast to northern Florida. Populations also exist on some of the islands of the Caribbean

## HABITAT

Found in dense, unbroken deciduous or mixed deciduous/coniferous woodlands, the Broad-winged Hawk utilizes parts of woodlands for nesting that the red-tailed hawk and red-shouldered hawk do not. They are often found feeding near openings created by roads, trails, or wetlands. This is a very migratory hawk that moves south to winter in Central and South America.

## NESTING

Courtship displays include whistling calls and territorial advertisements involving soaring and swooping flights by both members of the pair. Broad-winged Hawks make a small stick nest in the crotch of a deciduous, or on occasion, a coniferous tree. Nests are rarely used for two consecutive years. Two to four eggs are laid and incubated by the female for 31 days.

## FEEDING HABITS

Like the other buteos, the Broad-winged Hawk eats a wide variety of prey. During the nesting season, mammals -- primarily chipmunks, shrews, and voles -- are common in their diets, along with frogs, lizards, and nestling birds. On the wintering grounds of South America, insects, lizards, and frogs seem to make up the majority of their diet. They hunt directly from perches or by searching during flight.

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