

Red-tailed Hawk

Buse à queue rousse

Buteo jamaicensis



Migratory Species

Wingspan: 117 cm to 147 cm



The Red-tailed Hawk is easily recognized even during flight due to its large rounded tail, as well as by its characteristic cry: *Kîîrrrr*. The upper portion of its chest, called a plastron, is white, as are the undersides of its rounded wings. Its back is brown.



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The male and female are similar, though the female is usually slightly larger.



The Red-tailed Hawk lives in forests and forest clearings, as well as in wide-open spaces such as fields. The Red-tailed Hawk is the best known of the four hawk species, since we often see it near roads and highways.



The hawk's diet is mostly composed of small mammals. It will also feed on birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects and sometimes even dead animals including fish.



The Red-tailed Hawk can live 21 to 29 years.



The nest, shaped like a platform, is built in a tree that is easily accessible to the bird. The pair can also use an old nest that they fortify by adding some new material. The female typically lays 2 eggs.



The young make their first flight attempt at 60 to 63 days of age. They remain dependant on their parents the first 12 to 15 weeks of life. They will only leave the parental territory 4 to 21 weeks after leaving the nest.



The Red-tailed Hawk population has appeared to rise in North America since the 1970s, and this is probably due to an increase in territory availability, such as fields and roadsides, which are becoming more and more numerous in Quebec. It remains essential, however, not to forget that birds of prey are at the top of their food chain and so they are always found in relatively low numbers in nature.



The characteristic cry of the Red-tailed Hawk is often heard in films and television advertisements, but is sometimes falsely associated with eagles. The Red-tailed Hawk sometimes shares its territory with another well-known bird of prey: the Great-Horned Owl. These two species can cohabit peacefully since they hunt at different times of day; the hawk being diurnal and the owl nocturnal.