

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Migratory Species

Épervier brun

Accipiter striatus



Wingspan: 51 cm à 69 cm.



The Sharp-shinned Hawk is the smallest representative of its family (Accipitridae). In Quebec, only Cooper's Hawk and Northern Goshawk are also part of this family. The Sharp-shinned Hawk is a small bird of prey the size of a pigeon, with a long square tail hosting a white band at its tip. Its rufous chest is striped with white while its back is blueish grey. The adults have red eyes and the young have yellow eyes.



The female is much larger than the male.



The Sharp-shinned Hawk frequents forests, groves, and the edges of woodland. We can often see it hunting near bird feeders.



The Sharp-shinned Hawk feeds primarily on birds, but also on rodents, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. It is probably due to its diet mainly of birds that we see it hunting near bird feeders. For a hawk, a bird feeder near a wooded area is a perfect hunting spot.



On average, a hawk lives 5 to 8 years. The record lifetime in nature is 9 years 10 months. In captivity, the Sharp-shinned Hawk can live 12 years.



The nest is typically built in a conifer (ex. a Christmas tree), near the trunk. It is made of branches and bark. The female lays 3 to 5 eggs.



The young males leave the nest between 21 and 30 days of age and the females towards 24 to 33 days. The chicks remain dependant on their parents until they are about 49 to 72 days old.



It is difficult to evaluate the status of the Sharp-shinned Hawk since our knowledge of its population is rather limited. It would seem that the population suffered a decline between the 1940s and 1970s, probably due to the use of pesticides in fields. Today, the Sharp-shinned Hawk is poorly-liked by people due to its habit of hunting near their bird-feeders. The role of these hawks is, however, important, as they target the weakest birds. Many hawks die after flying into windows.



The Sharp-shinned Hawk is normally a migratory species, but for a few years now, it tends to stay with us during the wintertime and simply profit from the abundance of prey at bird feeders near houses.