

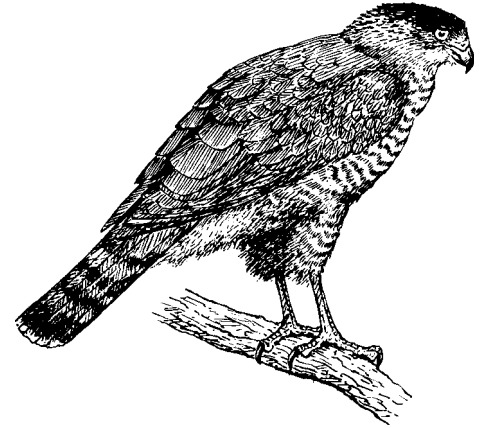


Rare Wildlife of New Hampshire

Cooper's Hawk

Accipiter cooperii

NEW HAMPSHIRE: THREATENED
UNITED STATES: NOT LISTED



How does it look and behave?

Like other accipiters, the Cooper's hawk has short, rounded wings and a long tail. Approximately the size of a crow (the female is larger than the male), this hawk appears long and slender when perched or in flight, with a 2-3 foot wingspan.

- Appearance:** Its long, rounded tail has four alternating bands of dark and light brown equal in width with a wide white band bordering the lower edge. The adult male is blue-gray on the crown and slate gray on the neck, back and upper wings. The breast and flight feathers show prominent red barring. Females are browner above and show less blue. The adult has reddish eyes and yellow bill and legs.
- Behavior:** The Cooper's hawk rarely soars, but flies with several quick flaps and a glide. It hunts on the wing swooping down from a tree at the edge of a clearing, killing its prey with powerful talons. Adults teach the young flight and hunting skills by dropping food to them while in flight and by flushing out birds for them to hunt.
- Calls:** Silent and secretive most of the year, the Cooper's hawk becomes quite vocal during the breeding season. At dawn the male and female sing a 10-20 minute duet of "cac-cac-cac", "kuck-kuck-kuck", or "ca-ca-ca". When distressed, the Cooper's hawk gives a series of high pitched "kaks", similar to a flicker.
- Breeding:** A courting pair will "sky dance" by soaring high over their territory. The male flaps slowly and rhythmically. Once incubation begins, the female rarely leaves the nest and the male gradually stops singing. Both the male and female participate in nest building.

Where is it found?

- Habitat:** The male establishes a territory of 1-2 miles in patchy deciduous and coniferous woods. White pine stands are preferred. Nest sites are found on forest edges, near agricultural lands, fields and forest clearings. They feed in open areas and woodlots away from the nest site.
- Nest:** A bulky platform of twigs lined with bark shavings, fine sticks and some moss, grass, leaves or feathers may be located 20' - 65' high in a crotch of a deciduous tree or on the horizontal branches adjacent to the trunk of a coniferous tree. The conifer nest can be 25" - 30" in diameter and 6" - 8" in height; the deciduous nest may be 24" in



Rare Wildlife of New Hampshire

diameter and 17" in height. A new nest is built each year. Occasionally, an abandoned crow's or squirrel's nest will serve as a base on top of which the new nest is built. The nest is built in dense forest canopy cover with an open vegetative understory to allow easy access to the nest.

Range: The breeding range of the Cooper's hawk includes southern Canada, the United States and northern Mexico. It winters at low elevations in the central and southern United States and throughout Central America. Occasionally, it will winter as far north as New England. The Cooper's hawk returns to New Hampshire in April and migrates south in October. The breeding range encompasses the entire state, yet only two successful nests were recorded from 1980-87.

What are the management opportunities?

A forest mosaic of open areas and a tall, dense canopy cover best suits the Cooper's hawk. Foresters, landowners and other land managers can implement the following management recommendations:

- Maintain forest openings near deciduous and coniferous (especially white pine) stands. Within each vegetation type maintain about 3% permanent openings to ensure sufficient prey base and foraging areas.
- When cutting firewood within potential Cooper's hawk habitat, leave a few large trees with wide crotches for nest trees.
- Stay away from known or suspected nesting sites during the breeding season (April-July). Intrusion by humans and their pets disturbs the food source which affects the nesting success of the Cooper's hawk.
- Leave an uncut buffer of 66 feet (1 chain) around a known nest site. Avoid harvesting trees or other disturbance within 330 feet of the nest site during the nesting season.

What should you do if you see a Cooper's hawk?

It is most important to report sightings of Cooper's hawk breeding activity and potential nesting. If you observe or suspect nesting contact NH Fish and Game Department, Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, 2 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 271-2462 or Audubon Society of NH, 3 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-9909.

Page one graphic used with permission from **New England Wildlife: Habitat, Natural History, and Distribution. USDA Forest Service General Technical Report NE-108, June, 1987.**



NEW HAMPSHIRE
NATURAL HERITAGE
INVENTORY

"Helping You Put Knowledge and Research To Work"

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
University of New Hampshire, County Governments, New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development,
New Hampshire Fish and Game, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cooperating.