



Aplomado Falcon

Falco femoralis

Length: *male:* 14 to 16 inches (35 to 39 cm); *female:* 16 to 18 inches (41 to 45 cm)

Wingspan: *male:* 31 to 33 inches (78 to 84 cm); *female:* 37 to 40 inches (93 to 102 cm)

Weight: *male:* 7.3 to 10.8 ounces (208 to 305 grams); *female:* 11 to 16.2 ounces (310 to 460 grams)

Description: The Aplomado Falcon is a colorful, medium-sized falcon. Its narrow wings reach three-quarters to the tip of the tail when perched. The light breast and rusty underparts are separated by a black belly band shaped like an hourglass; this marking may be referred to as a cumberbund. The black tail is long and narrow with thin, whitish bands. The Aplomado head is distinctive, with light cheeks and throat, a black eye stripe, a narrow malar stripe, and a creamy superciliary line. This line extends to the back of the head, forming a V, which is set off by the dark crown. Both sexes have very similar plumage. The adult male has a clear white breast, and the female has thin breast streaks. The female may be as much as 45 percent heavier than the male but there can be substantial overlap between the sexes. Juvenal plumage is more rufous above, and the white upper breast is streaked with dark brown. The belly band is more complete than the adult's, and is dark brown with tawny streaking.

Range: In North America the Aplomado Falcon occurs in pockets across Mexico, and was formerly present in parts of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. It has been described as "scattered" in numbers and distribution. A program to release captive-bred birds has reestablished limited breeding numbers in Texas and New Mexico, and into Mexico. It still ranges through most of Central and South America as far south as Tierra del Fuego, but is absent from the forested Amazon.

Habitat: A bird of open country, the Aplomado Falcon prefers grasslands interspersed with cactus, yucca, and mesquite. It also inhabits oak and pine savannahs, areas of larger scattered trees and shrubs, and stands of trees concentrated along streams and marshes. It may also live in coastal deserts.

Behavior: Because of their ability to maneuver in tight foliage below the canopy and to chase prey on foot, Aplomado Falcons are often compared to the forest hawks (accipiters), particularly the Cooper's Hawk, which is very similar in size and habits. Aplomados also tend to perch on the inner limbs of trees and bushes, often to escape extreme heat, and are quite adept at hunting by hopping through tree branches. They often launch attacks from the tops of yuccas and other vegetation. They hunt primarily grassland birds, such as sparrows and doves; insects and even bats are also taken. The Aplomado Falcon is known to hunt well before sunrise and long after