

Species Sheets: Red-tailed Hawk



photo by Kate Davis ©

Common name: Red-tailed Hawk

Latin Name: *Buteo jamaicensis*

Field Marks: Length 22 inches
Wing span 50 inches



Our most common “buteo”, or soaring, open-country hawk. Usually lighter above with a darker brown belly. Reddish tail occurs only in adult birds at the age of 2 1/2; and before that tail is a brown with many dark bars. Subspecies are light-colored “Krider’s” that breeds in Northern Great Plains, and very dark brown “Harlan’s” that breeds in Alaska. Call a very distinctive, harsh *keeeeer*; descending in tone.

Habitat:

“Ubiquitous”, which means everywhere. Countryside, deserts, field and farmlands, and woodlands in North America. May favor forest edges.

Behavior:

Hunting tactics range from “sit and wait”, where Red-tails perch out in open on phone poles and snags. Or soaring and scanning method of catching updrafts or thermals to observe large hunting area. Feeds on small to medium-sized mammals and birds, plus reptiles like snakes.

Nest and eggs:

Sturdy stick and twig nests built in trees or on a cliff, often lined with bark, sprigs of evergreen and fresh green foliage. May be used year after year. Nests may be used by other birds like Great Horned Owls. 2-3 eggs and fledge youngsters at about 45 days.

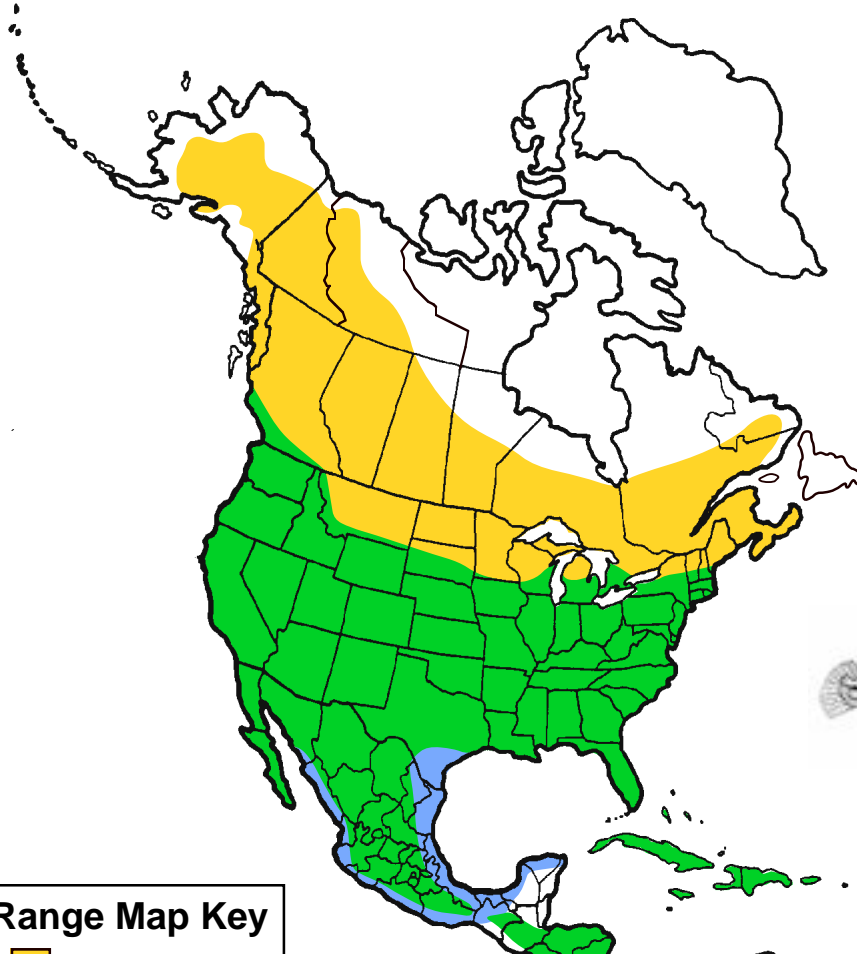
Movement:

Often year-round residents, but these winter birds may be northern migrants that make it this far south. Or may be individuals that have found a steady food supply, especially during mild winters.

Interesting Fact:

May be one raptor species that has profited from human presence. Forest clearing and agriculture practices have insured the Red-tail a spot in successful breeding niches. A very abundant and thriving species.

Range Map: Red-tailed Hawk



Red-tailed Hawk, Copyright © Kate Davis

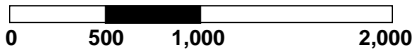


These maps are designed to show the general limits of occurrence. Within those limits, each species will likely be found only in appropriate habitat.

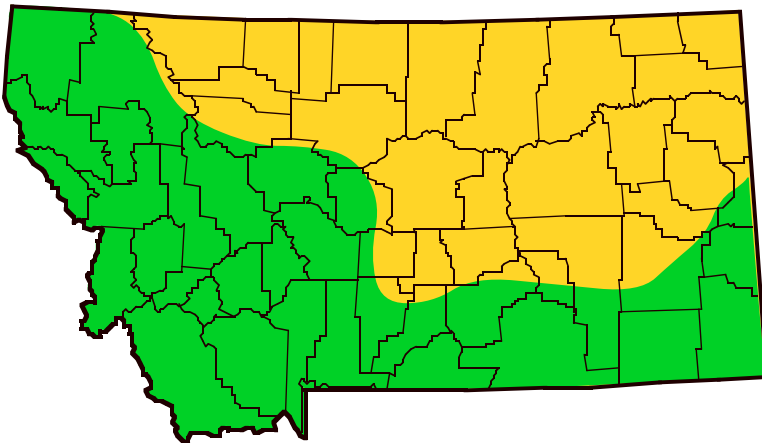
Range Map Key

-  Summer
-  Year-round
-  Winter

scale: 1 inch = 1,000 miles



Raptor Range in Montana



Montana range maps are based on the Montana Bird Distribution data.