

Cooper's Hawk

Accipiter cooperii

Among the bird world's most skillful fliers, Cooper's Hawks are common woodland hawks that tear through cluttered tree canopies in high speed pursuit of other birds. You're most likely to see one prowling above a forest edge or field using just a few stiff wingbeats followed by a glide. With their smaller lookalike, the Sharpshinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawks make for famously tricky identifications. Both species are sometimes unwanted guests at bird feeders, looking for an easy meal (but not one of sunflower seeds).

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

A medium-sized hawk with the classic accipiter shape: broad, rounded wings and a very long tail. In Cooper's Hawks, the head often appears large, the shoulders broad, and the tail rounded.

Color Pattern

Adults are steely blue-gray above with warm reddish bars on the underparts and thick dark bands on the tail. Juveniles are brown above and crisply streaked with brown on the upper breast, giving them a somewhat hooded look compared with young Sharpshinned Hawks' more diffuse streaking.

Behavior

Look for Cooper's Hawks to fly with a flap-flap-glide pattern typical of accipiters. Even when crossing large open areas they rarely flap continuously. Another attack maneuver is to fly fast and low to the ground, then up and over an obstruction to surprise prey on the other side.

Habitat

Wooded habitats from deep forests to leafy subdivisions and backyards.



Measurements

Male

- Length - 14.6 - 15.4 inches
- Wingspan - 24.4 - 35.4 inches
- Weight - 7.8 - 14.5 ounces

Female

- Length - 16.5 - 17.7 inches
- Wingspan - 29.5 - 35.4 inches
- Weight - 11.6 - 24 ounces