

Sharp-Shinned Hawk

Accipiter striatus

Description

The Sharp-shinned Hawk ranges widely across North America, Central America, and parts of South America. Northern populations migrate south during harsh winters. They inhabit diverse habitats from lowlands to high montane forests, favouring coniferous forests in some regions and scrubby second growth, agricultural fields.

They are visually striking with dark grey backs, reddish-orange barred breasts, long legs, and banded tails. They build stick nests lined with bark and greenery in dense tree stands, laying 2–5 eggs incubated for 30–32 days. Chicks fledge 3–4 weeks later and may breed the following year.

After capturing prey, the Sharp-shinned Hawk typically carries it to a designated spot near the nest called a plucking post or butcher's block, where it removes feathers or fur before consuming the meal.

FUN FACTS

- They rely on surprise and quick flights to chase down prey, skillfully maneuvering through dense vegetation for cover during pursuits.
- Sharp-shinned Hawks primarily feed on small birds, making up to 90% of their diet.
- The name "Sharp-shinned Hawk" refers to the sharp ridge on their legs, not actual shins.
- Female sharp-shinned hawks are larger than males.

If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at 403-214-1312, for tips, instructions and advice.

