

Rough-legged hawk

Buteo lagopus

Description

Rough-legged hawks favour open habitats such as tundra, taiga, prairies, marshes, and human-altered landscapes like pasturelands. Their plumage varies from light to dark shades, with distinct patterns between males, females, and juveniles. Males can display multiple dark bands at the end of their tails, contrary to females who typically only have one dark band at the tip of their tail.

They construct their nests using twigs, grass, bones and sticks high on cliffs, rocky outcrops, or riverbanks with a good vantage point.

Rough-legged hawks are solitary or can sometimes be spotted in mating pairs. They rarely congregate in large groups. Nesting in the tundra, pairs perform aerial displays together, circling high in the sky. The female lays 2-7 white eggs with brown markings, adjusting the number based on prey availability.

FUN FACTS

- The name 'Rough-legged' refers to the feathering that extends down the legs to the base of the toes – a helpful adaptation for staying warm in frigid weather.
- Rough-legged hawks alarm calls sound similar to "mew".
- Rough-legged hawks primarily consume lemmings and voles (rodents).
- They hunt during daylight hours and only occasionally at dusk and dawn.

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.

