

# The Red-Shouldered Hawk



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**S**oaring high above, you will probably hear the hawk's piecing sound before you actually see the bird. The red-shouldered hawk uses this dominant and consistent call if it feels its nest is being threatened or during the mating season.

A medium-sized bird of prey, the mature, red-shouldered hawk has a peachy hue overall with brown feathers on its shoulders, belly, and chest, while the juvenile's feathers are white with a brown spot pattern. Its head is small, and its beak is hooked. Although female hawks are larger, male adults weigh approximately 1.3 lbs. and generally have a wingspan that ranges from 2 to 4 feet with a flight speed of 18 to 34 mph.

When hawks look for prey, they perch with their head looking downward, spying on lizards, snakes, and amphibians. They are territorial and have been known to prey on chickens, rabbits, and other small animals so it is always wise to be aware of their presence and to be alert for their call if you have a small pet in the yard.

Red-shouldered hawks start to build their nest anytime between January and May, finding spots where foraging habitats such as pastures, lawns, and water are nearby. Their medium-sized nests are most often spotted in trees but can also be seen on fence- or power-line posts, and other high platforms. Once a safe nest area is selected, the breeding pair will usually return year after year to the same site.

*"Stood alone on a mountain top, starin' out at the Great Divide. I could go east, I could go west, it was all up to me to decide. Just then I saw a young hawk flyin' and my soul began to rise."*

— Bob Seger







**B**reeding exercises take place as the male and female birds soar in circles high above in the sky. The male will produce its hawk call before landing on the female to mate. Both bird parents will incubate the eggs for about a month or until they hatch when they then take on the responsibility of feeding the hatchlings together. In about 6 weeks, the chicks are ready to fly off and establish their own territory. Red-shouldered hawks are monogamous and mate for life. Although the red-shouldered hawk may live to be 20 years old, only half of the hatchlings survive the first year, and a significant number of hawks only live up to 10 years.

These wings of wonder live in Florida throughout the year and are known to be the most common hawk seen in the Sunshine State. Protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and federal and state law, these laws not only cover the birds but also protect their nest and eggs.

To view more photography by Rick LaBerge, visit [Focused-Glass.com](http://Focused-Glass.com).



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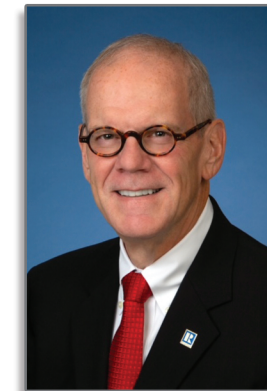
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