

Marine Science Center Resident Bird Guide



Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

- **Range:** Widespread from Alaska, throughout North America, south to Florida
- **Habitat:** Forests mainly surrounded by or near a body of water
- **Diet:** Mainly fish; also waterfowl, mammals, and carrion
- **Weight:** 9-14 lb **Wingspan:** 6-8 feet
- **Life Span:** 20 years or more
- The national bird of the United States, the striking white head and tail of the Bald Eagle are unmistakable. It takes 5 to 7 years to gain full adult plumage. The birds are monogamous and are thought to pair for life. Pairs renew their bonds with spectacular acrobatic displays. As is true in most raptors, the females are up to 1/3 larger than the males. Eagles are threatened by human impacts such as gun shots, electrocutions, poisoning, and collisions with vehicles. Successful conservation efforts have helped populations rebound from near extinction.
- MSC: 2 Adults, male and female, with the female being the larger bird. Acquired in 2007 as mature adults, both hit by cars while eating road kill.



Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis

- **Range:** Along the Pacific, Gulf, and Atlantic coasts, south of Virginia.
- **Habitat:** Found in warm coastal marine and estuarine environments .
- **Diet:** Varied species of fish
- **Weight:** 8.2 lb **Wingspan:** 80 inches
- **Life Span:** 15-20 years
- Brown Pelicans are often seen flying in single-file formation and are easily distinguished by the long bill with extendible pouch. This species of pelican sights prey from the air and plunge dives head first into the water, trapping fish in its extended pouch. Once a pair forms a bond within a colony, a large flat nest is built in shrubs, mangroves or on the ground using sticks and grasses. Immature pelicans are gray-brown with white under parts. In the 1970's, pesticides like DDT threatened the extinction of this species by thinning eggshells which then cracked during incubation.



Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

- ▶ **Range:** Great Black-backed Gulls breed along the North Atlantic Coast, wintering as far south as Florida.
- ▶ **Habitat:** Breeds on islands and salt marshes; winters at sea and along coastlines
- ▶ **Diet:** Fish, marine invertebrates, birds, eggs and carrion
- ▶ Often called seagulls, Great Black-backed Gulls are ground-nesting carnivores, taking live food or scavenging. They will capture prey while walking, often stealing from other birds. Great Black-backed Gull are the largest species of gull in the world. The larger species of gulls are resourceful and highly intelligent birds, demonstrating complex methods of communication with a highly developed social structure. Great Black-backed Gulls are very powerful and often raid tern and gull colonies for the young and even adults.



Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

- ▶ **Range:** Herring Gulls breed from the Northeast Atlantic Coast across all of Canada to Alaska and winter throughout much of the United States, including Florida.
- ▶ **Habitat:** Breeds on islands, freshwater lakes, large rivers and salt marshes; winters at sea and along coastlines
- ▶ **Diet:** Fish, marine invertebrates, birds, eggs and carrion
- ▶ Often called seagulls, Herring Gulls are ground-nesting carnivores, taking live food or scavenging. They will capture prey while walking, often stealing from other birds. The larger species of gulls are resourceful and highly intelligent birds, demonstrating complex methods of communication with a highly developed social structure. Gulls also exhibit tool-use behavior, such as dropping large hard food items on rocks or sand to break them open. Many species of gulls have learned to co-exist successfully and thrive in human habitats.



Herring Gull about to drop a clam on a rock to break it open

American Kestrel

Falco sparverius

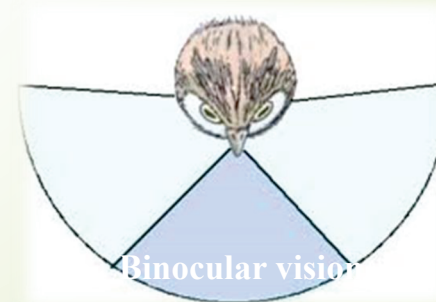
- ▶ **Range:** Throughout North America , as far as the tip of South America.
- ▶ **Habitat:** Scrub, open fields, deserts, and edges of forests.
- ▶ **Diet:** Large insects, small birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
- ▶ **Weight:** 3-4 oz **Wingspan:** 22 inches
- ▶ **Life Span:** 5 - 10 years
- ▶ Kestrels are one of three species of falcons that live in Florida and the only one that breeds here. They are one of the most colorful of all raptors and is also the smallest. A swift hunter with keen eyesight, the kestrel watches for prey from tall perches, such as trees and telephone poles and will hover and drop on prey. Florida's subspecies is listed as threatened and the breeding population has dropped significantly in result of loss of habitat from increasing deforestation. You can help them by putting up nest boxes .
- ▶ MSC: Priscilla, acquired 2006, one of four babies found in Apopka, Fl., raised in captivity, imprinted/psychologically impaired, non-releasable.



Eastern Screech-Owl

Megascops asio

- **Range:** Throughout the eastern United States and southern Canada
- **Habitat:** Widespread over forests, wooded urban and suburban areas
- **Diet:** Small mammals, and birds, invertebrates and amphibians
- **Weight:** 4- 8 oz **Wingspan:** 18 inches
- **Life Span:** 10-15 years
- Eastern Screech owls are the smallest owls in Florida. They appear in three distinct color morphs of either gray, brown or red, making them difficult to distinguish from surrounding tree bark. Screech Owls usually nest in tree cavities. Owls use a combination of sharp hearing and binocular vision to judge distances for prey location as they hunt at night. Their trilling song can often be heard in the evening to communicate with others. An important predator in urban and suburban areas, controlling the populations of pests.
- MSC: 4 Screech Owls, 3 on display (red-phase) 2 with neurological damage, 1 with eye injury, 1 glove-trained bird named OTUS, acquired in 2007, not the brightest bulb in the box, failed mouse hunting school 3 times.



Barred Owl

Strix varia

- **Range:** Throughout North America
- **Habitat:** Mixed conifer and deciduous forests.
- **Diet:** Small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and insects.
- **Weight:** 1- 2 lb **Wingspan:** 42 inches
- **Life Span:** 15 to 20 years
- Its name comes from the horizontal barring of light and dark bands on the neck and chest. The Barred Owl hunts at night, perching high on a branch and swooping down with talons extended forward to grab its prey. The ability to rotate its head about 270 degrees along with silent flight, acute hearing, and sharp talons make Barred Owls efficient hunters. It hunts near dawn or dusk, making this bird of prey nocturnal . Birds of Prey regurgitate pellets of undigested fur and bone from their prey. The standard barred owl call is often translated as sounding much like "Who cooks for you?"
- MSC: Zeus, acquired in 2004, found as a fledgling with a broken wing, transported by well meaning rescuers out of state, flown back to Florida. Zeus can fly, but not well enough to hunt live prey items successfully.



Cooper's Hawk

Accipiter cooperii

- **Range:** Throughout North America
- **Habitat:** Open forests and woodlands, can also be found in wooded suburbs
- **Diet:** Medium-sized birds, doves, pigeons, starlings, robins, sometimes small mammals
- **Weight:** 220–680g **Wingspan:** 25–34”
- Also known as chicken hawk, this bird threads its way through tree branches at top speed in pursuit of prey, their flight becoming powerful, quick, and very agile. Cooper's Hawks hold their catch away from the body and squeezes it until it dies. In adults, the back plumage is blue- gray with a darker head cap and rusty barring on their under parts. It also has a long, barred tail with a rounded tip. The Cooper's Hawk may become an unwanted guest at bird feeders, but it does contribute to help control the population of invasive dove species.
MSC: Cooper, acquired in 2014 as a fledgling, had a broken wing at the elbow (humeral/ulna joint), rendering the bird non-releasable.



Red-shouldered Hawk

Buteo lineatus

- ▶ **Range:** Along eastern North America and the coast of California.
- ▶ **Habitat:** Deciduous and mixed forests usually near water or swamps
- ▶ **Diet:** Small mammals, birds, invertebrates and amphibians.
- ▶ **Weight:** 1- 2 lb **Wingspan:** 40 inches
- ▶ **Life Span:** up to 20 years
- ▶ Red- shouldered Hawks are medium-sized raptors with robust bodies, rust-colored marks on the wings and are one of the most vocal hawks in America. A diurnal predator, they generally hunt from a perch by dropping on prey. These birds are monogamous and territorial, and will breed once yearly often using the same nest. Both the male and female build or refurbish the nest and raise the chicks. The major modern threats to these birds are loss of habitat from deforestation, poisoning from insecticides and industrial pollutants.
- ▶ **MSC:** Patches; acquired 2015, attacked by predator while still in the nest resulting in a loss of the right eye. Non-releasable.



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Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

- **Range:** Throughout North America
- **Habitat:** Widespread from the arctic tundra, mixed forests, swamps to urban areas
- **Diet:** Mainly small mammals; but also birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates
- **Weight:** 2-4 lb **Wingspan:** 40-60 inches
- The Great Horned Owl is one of the most widespread and common owls in North America. Their robust bodies, bright yellow eyes, and prominent ear tufts make them easy to differentiate from other owls. These birds hunt at night by waiting on a high perch and swooping down on prey. Owl ears are asymmetrical; the right ear is positioned higher than the left ear, causing sounds to reach one ear a fraction of a second before it reaches the other. The owl tilts and turns its head until the sounds equalize, allowing to pinpoint both the horizontal and vertical direction of sound made by prey.
- **MSC: Bubba, acquired in 2007, non-releasable due to wing injury.**



Red-tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis

- ▶ **Range:** Throughout North America, south as Panama in Central America.
- ▶ **Habitat:** Grasslands, marshes, deserts, forests, including urban areas.
- ▶ **Diet:** Mainly small mammals, but also birds and reptiles
- ▶ **Weight:** 2- 4 lb **Wingspan:** 43-57 inches
- ▶ **Life Span:** 10 to 21 years
- ▶ One of the most common hawks in North America, the Red-tailed Hawk has very broad, rounded wings and a wide rust colored tail. The same nesting territory may be defended by a pair for years, the Red-tailed Hawk will only take a new mate when its original mate dies. These hawks hunt by sighting prey either while soaring at high altitudes above open fields or perched atop a tree. Their keen eyesight can be 8 times more powerful than a human's. The Red-tailed Hawk's raspy and thrilling scream is often heard onscreen for most raptor soundtracks.

