



Klamath Network Featured Creature

July 2010

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)

FIELD NOTES:

General Description:

The Northern Goshawk is the largest North American accipiter, a group of carnivorous birds that includes the Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk. Male Goshawks measure 19-22 inches long with a 37-41 inch wingspan, while females are much larger at 23-25 inches long with a 43-50 inch wingspan.

Its short, broad wings and long tail are adaptations to maneuvering through trees in the dense forests in which it lives and nests. The flight is a characteristic "five slow flaps – straight glide."

Goshawks can be found in much of the northern hemisphere including Europe and Asia. The name "Northern Goshawk" is reserved for the birds in North America, however.

Habitat:

Although they nest in a variety of habitat types—from willow stands along Arctic rivers to massive old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest—they seem to prefer mature forests with large trees on moderate slopes with open understories. They also favor conditions 4-9 years after severe fire in forests where they prey on woodpeckers.

Where to See It in the Klamath Parks:

It is possible to sight a goshawk in any of the Network parks. Be careful in the springtime, though; if you're near a nest, the bird may actually attack you. It is well known for its fierce defense of its nest.

Cool Fact:

A Goshawk adorned the helmet of Attila the Hun.



http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Northern_Goshawk_ad_M2.jpg



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Goshawk
Accipiter gentilis
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<http://www.avianweb.com/goshawks.html>

More Information:

Squires, John R., and Richard T. Reynolds. 1997. Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). in [The Birds of North America](#), No. 298 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds)

Reproduction and Development:

In the spring (mid-March through June) breeding season, male Northern Goshawks perform a spectacular "rollercoaster" display to the females. Because of this display, the usually secretive birds are more easily seen in the spring.

The nest looks like a large bowl and is made of thin sticks lined with bark and greenery and is placed in a large tree (usually one of the largest trees in the nesting area). Goshawks frequently reuse the same nest for multiple years or at least will return to the same nesting area.

The clutch size is usually 2 to 4, but anywhere from 1 to 5 bluish white eggs may be laid. The female generally defends the nest while the male provisions the family with food.

When they first hatch (after 28-38 days), the young are covered in white down. It takes about 35 days for them to leave the nest and the young may remain in their parents' territory for up to a year.

Diet:

The Northern Goshawk maneuvers through dense woods to find prey as small as squirrels and as large as grouse, crows, snowshoe hares, and rabbits.

It is very persistent in pursuing prey. A goshawk was once seen pursuing a snowshoe hare for almost an hour until the hare finally ran into a clearing and could be snatched up.