

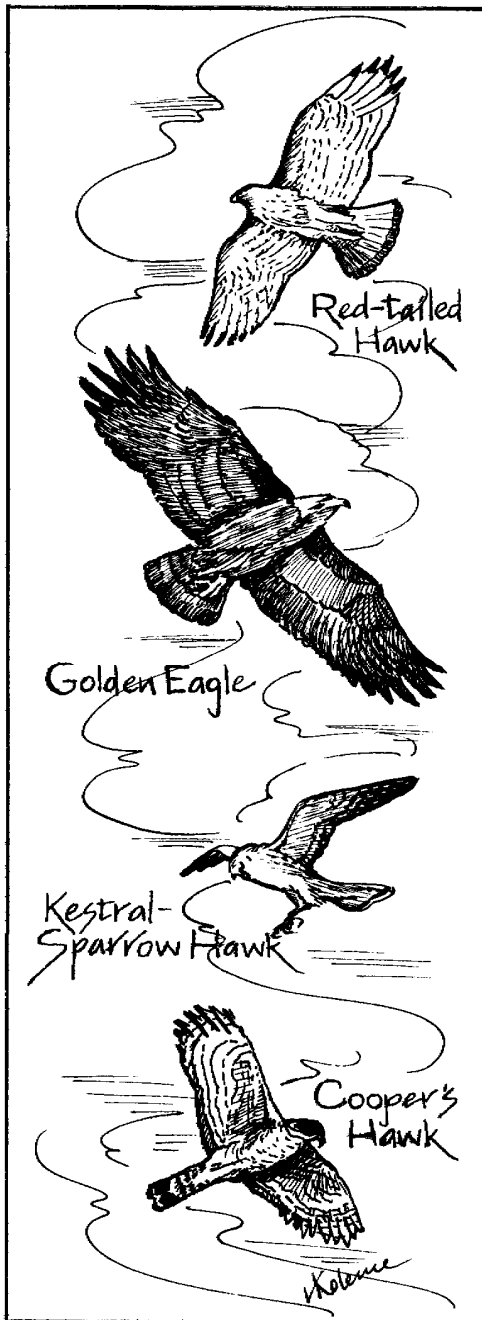


Foothills

Nature Notes

CITY OF PALO ALTO • COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT • OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND GOLF DIVISION

Birds of Prey of the Foothills



Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Adult and immature, common

This is a large soaring hawk. It has broad wings that span up to 4½ feet. The most distinctive field mark is its reddish tail, easily seen when the sun shines on it. The immature hawk's tail is streaked. The adult has a prominent belly band. It feeds on rodents and some lizards. The call of this hawk is a high scream: *keeeeer-r-r*.

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

Immature

Rare in the San Francisco peninsula (more common in inner coast ranges). This is a very large soaring bird with a wing span up to 7 feet. Adult is dark brown with a flash of gold on its neck. Immature has a white tail with a dark band and flashes of white on its wings. Its diet consists mostly of large rodents and rabbits.

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

Common

Also known as the Sparrow Hawk, this is a small falcon about the size of a jay. It has distinctive black and white face patterns, and a rust colored back. The male has slate blue wings. The Kestrel hovers while hunting for insects and small rodents and it has a loud sharp call: *kilty kilty hilly*.

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)

Uncommon

This hawk has short rounded wings with a span up to 3 feet. It has a heavily barred tail which is rounded at the tip. The main diet of the Cooper's hawk is small birds and mammals. It flies low over the trees and ambushes its prey.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)

Uncommon

Although very similar to and often confused with the Cooper's hawk, the Sharp-shinned is smaller in size, with a wing span just over 2 feet. It has a long, barred, square cut tail. This hawk hunts by flying through the trees and preys mostly on small birds. It has a habit of plucking the feathers from the captured bird before feeding it to its young.

Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

Common

This is the largest "eared" owl. The body length is up to 20 inches long and its wing span is up to 55 inches. It has fine horizontal bars on its chest and wide set "ears." It hunts in the evening (the best time to see it) and it feeds on rabbits, rodents, small birds and sometimes other owls. The call of this owl is a series of 3 to 8 hoots.

Screech Owl (*Otus kennicottii*)

Common

A very small "eared" owl, only 8 inches in length. The gray color phase is the typical color pattern found in the West, but it also comes in brown and rust in other parts of the country. It feeds mainly on mice. This owl has a voice of slurred whistles sounding like a bouncing ball.

