

*The Weekly Wing*  
**By Brandon Jackson (The Birding Expert)**  
**and his go-to contributor Alex Hebeisen (The Typist)**

In this edition of The Weekly Wing, we will be talking about raptors, specifically hawks, eagles and owls.

Brandon here! In the past 10 days, I have spotted 4 eagle nests. These birds' nests can be up to 7 feet wide and several feet deep. I have noticed that eagles like to nest in the crook of a tree; and if you see a nest, they're hard to miss so you don't have to look too hard.

Now lets talk about the actual bird. The Bald Eagle is not actually bald; it just has a white head. The adult Bald Eagle has a pure white head and tail, but the rest of it is brown. It takes five years for an eagle to fully mature. The juvenile is brown with white patches all over and a brown head. The second year, the bird has much more white on its belly and chest. In its third year, the bird has bits of white on its belly, but is overall brown. In its last year before maturing, the eagle gets the familiar white head and tail feathers, but they still lack the solid white of the adult. At one point these birds were going down in numbers, but they have recovered.

One of the most common hawks we have in my state of Minnesota is the Red Tailed Hawk (we know who they want to win the super bowl). It has a white underside and is brown on the top, but its tail is a light red. A lot of times you will see this hawk on telephone poles, because its looking for rodents. Another common hawk is the Cooper's Hawk. This hawk is small enough where you could mistake it for a Mourning Dove. It has a dark gray back and light brown lines on its white belly. The adult has piercing orange eyes. The Osprey, or fish hawk, is also common in MN. Ninety-nine percent of its diet is fish. The fish hawk is all brown and white, and has a unique hunting technique. It finds a fish in a body of water and waits for it to surface. Then, the bird dives and plunges into the water and flies off with dinner.

The Great Horned owl is the most commonly known owl. This will probably surprise you, but I have never seen an owl in the wild before. This bird likes small rodents and has soft, quiet feathers so its prey can't hear the owl coming. These birds have a brown back and brown belly with two ear tufts. The actual ears are on the sides of its head, but you can't see them easily. This owl has great eyesight because of its huge eyes and is nocturnal.

All of these have talons and curved beaks, so they are raptors. Raptors are the predators of the forest.

Thanks again for reading The Weekly Wing!  
Brandon and Alex

Sources: The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America