

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (*BUTEO REGALIS*)



Description

Ferruginous hawks are the largest buteo at a total length of 22-27 inches (56-69 cm) and a wingspan of 56 inches (142 cm). Light-morph adults are distinguishable from other buteos by their white tail, stark white underparts, and a rufous back and shoulders. Rufous leggings are another diagnostic feature of this buteo. Dark-morph birds do occur and are identifiable by the light-colored tail and the light area on the upper and lower surfaces of the primaries.

Habitat

This species inhabits open terrain such as grasslands or shrubsteppe habitats in both its breeding and wintering ranges. It will also winter near cultivated fields if an adequate prey base exists. Preferred prey include jackrabbits (*Lepus*), cottontails (*Sylvilagus*), ground squirrels (*Spermophilus*), and pocket gophers (*Thomomys*). Ferruginous hawks generally arrive in the Central Valley from their breeding grounds in October and remain through March.

Range/distribution

Ferruginous hawks occur throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Photo: U.S. Geological Survey/photo by George Jameson www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/id/html/h3480pi.jpg, accessed September 9, 2002

References

- Bechard, M.J., and J.K. Schmutz. 1995. Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 172 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- Dunne, P., D. Sibley, and C. Sutton. 1988. *Hawks in Flight*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. 45-50.