

## Raptor Mews: Meet our Birds

Birds of Prey or “Raptors” are birds with hooked beaks and sharp talons that are strict carnivores: they only eat other animals in order to survive. Hashawha houses several raptor species at the Raptor Mews. These have been evaluated and deemed non-releasable by veterinarians and rehabbers. They are part of our educational programs at Bear Branch Nature Center and Outdoor School.



### Eastern Screech Owl

*Otus asio*

Eastern Screech Owls are the smallest species of owl found in Carroll County. Their color pattern can vary from bright red to gray. The strong patterns on the belly and back, as well as the ear tufts, allow them to blend in with their environment, making it easier to hunt for prey and hide from predators. Though they are predators, they frequently fall prey to larger owl species themselves.



### Barred Owl

*Strix varia*



Also known as ‘Swamp Owls’, Barred Owls can be found mainly in hardwood marsh areas. They are mostly nocturnal, and usually like to hunt at night. However, it is not uncommon to see one in the late afternoon, getting a jump on the day’s hunting. They will eat a variety of prey, including mice, frogs, and even crayfish!

Barred Owls have a very distinct call. If you listen closely, it sounds like they are asking a question: “Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?”

### Great Horned Owl

*Bubo virginianus*

These ‘tigers of the night’ are amazing creatures. Great Horned Owls are the top predator in the woods at night. They are extremely powerful and able to carry much larger prey in relation to their body size than other birds of prey. One of their favorite prey animals is skunks!

Great Horned Owls are strongly nocturnal and are rarely seen during the day.



They're deep hoo-hoo-hoo-hooooo calls are usually heard very late at night or early in the morning.

### **Red-tailed Hawk**

*Buteo jamaicensis*



One of the most common species of raptor throughout the country, Red-tailed Hawks can be seen in forests and fields, along roadsides, or even in more urban environments. These hawks hunt for mostly small mammals, but have been known to take lizards, frogs, and other birds. Red-tailed Hawks soaring over Hashwha with large snakes in their talons is a common sight at Hashawha.

With eyesight much better than a human's, these animals can spot a small mouse from 100 feet in the air. They are diurnal, which means they prefer to hunt during the day.

### **American Kestrel**

*Falco sparverius*

American Kestrels are North America's smallest falcon, but they are still adept and fierce hunters. They are common in the area, but are mistaken for Mourning Doves because of their small size. They are mainly insect-eaters, but have been known to eat frogs and small mammals, too. Kestrels can hover as they scout for prey, but tend to do so only briefly since the wind can blow them around.



### **Cooper's Hawk**

*Accipiter cooperii*



If you have a bird feeder in your yard, a Cooper's Hawk might be a frequent visitor. Cooper's Hawks prey mainly on other bird species, particularly medium sized birds like doves or starlings. They are agile and quick, flying through densely-wooded areas at great speeds. These birds are aerial foragers, which means they will take prey from the air.

The Cooper's Hawk looks very similar to another bird of prey, the Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*). Both have similar color patterns and are roughly the same size. Cooper's Hawks are only slightly larger, but experienced birders can identify them by the shape of their wings and head.

## **Black Vulture**

*Coragyps atratus*

Vultures are the cleanup crew of the natural world. They feed strictly on carrion- previously dead animals that the vulture did not hunt for itself. They are seen most often either soaring through the air in search of food or perched in trees, sunning themselves.

Unlike most other bird species, vultures do have a sense of smell, which allows them to find carcasses more easily. Turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*) have a better developed sense of smell, though, and often beat Black Vultures to the meal. However, Black Vultures will frequently follow Turkey Vultures and then take over their food.



## **Bald Eagle**

*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Back from the brink of extinction, Bald Eagles are becoming more frequent visitors to Maryland. They are large birds with a wingspan of over 6 feet! Both mature females and males display the characteristic white head for which the animal is named. Juvenile Bald Eagles are a dark brown for the first 5-6 years of life.

Nests are usually found along lakes and rivers where Bald Eagles can hunt for fish. These nests are so large; a fully grown human can easily lie across it!