



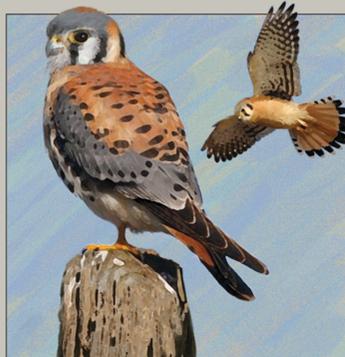
OSPREY

Ospreys prey on fish by hovering high above, then plunging feet-first into the water below. They are one of the most specialized raptors, with a reversible front toe and special barbed pads on their feet for gripping slippery prey.



GOLDEN EAGLE

The golden eagle is Mexico's national emblem. Its large "eagle eyes," eight times more powerful than ours, can spot a small mammal a mile away. Its wingspan is about seven feet. This magnificent raptor is one of the more widespread in the Northern Hemisphere.



AMERICAN KESTREL

Unlike other raptors, this fierce little falcon uses its beak to crush or sever its victim's spine. Nor does it build its own nest of sticks, preferring instead a used nest or tree cavity.



GREAT HORNED OWL

One of the few predators that will tackle a skunk, this large owl also preys on waterfowl. Its mottled plumage, long ears and upright stance help conceal it during the day. Pellets of indigestible fur, feathers, and bones at the base of a tree or ledge are signs of a nearby roost.



RED-TAILED HAWK

The red-tailed hawk is the most commonly seen raptor. Perched conspicuously atop a dead tree, fence post or utility pole, they watch patiently for movement, then drop suddenly, killing their prey with powerful talons.



COOPER'S HAWK

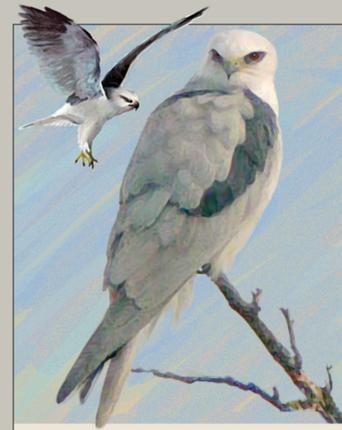
A long tail helps this agile hawk maneuver through forests in pursuit of smaller birds. It kills by grasping and squeezing its prey with its sharp talons. It uses its beak only for plucking feathers and tearing flesh.

PREDATORS IN THE SKY



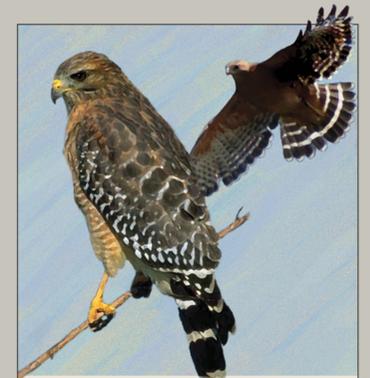
Aloft on currents of air, hovering over fields, darting through forests, or perched on telephone poles, these birds of prey, known as raptors, use their keen senses to find their next meal. In addition to extraordinary eyesight, hearing and even sense of smell, raptors have other specializations that make them expert hunters. Their sharp, hooked beaks are well suited to tearing meat. Their long, curved talons and powerful feet can deliver instant death.

California's exceptional diversity of habitats provides hunting grounds for a great variety of raptors, from smaller kestrels to the magnificent golden eagle. Male and female typically partner for life, returning to the same territory year after year to raise their chicks. Though some species adapt to urban life, others need large undisturbed areas in which to forage and nest. Rapid loss of wild land is the single greatest threat facing California's raptors.



WHITE-TAILED KITE

These elegant little raptors may often be seen near roadways, where they hover in the air hunting insects, reptiles, rodents and occasionally small birds.



RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

Perhaps the most talkative raptor, this noisy hawk prefers wooded areas near rivers or swamps. It has a varied diet, preying on snakes, frogs, mice, crayfish and sometimes small birds.



BARN OWL

The barn owl is well adapted for low-light hunting. Though its night vision is excellent, the feather ruff outlining its heart-shaped face funnels sound to its ears, enabling it to locate prey entirely by sound.



NORTHERN HARRIER

Instead of gliding high, this sleek hawk skims just feet above marshes and open fields hunting mice, rats and frogs. Sexes are easily told apart; adult males are grayish above. Females are brown with brown streaks below.



SWAINSON'S HAWK

Each year, these hawks gather in loose flocks to migrate back and forth from Canada and the U.S. to as far as Argentina, a journey of over 6000 miles.



TURKEY VULTURE

Sometimes called "buzzards," these large scavengers were once thought to be more closely related to storks than they are to hawks or eagles. Identified in flight by their V-shaped wings and rocking motion, they circle the skies on warm updrafts, sniffing the air for the scent of rotting meat.



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