



Bird Residents of the Nature Center

Skye the Red-shouldered Hawk

Personal History:

Skye came to us in June of 2006, after being treated by a veterinarian/rehabilitator. He was dropped off by someone who found him with serious head injuries, probably due to falling from the nest. Skye was only about 4 weeks old at the time. After being treated he was deemed non-releasable due to some permanent retinal damage to his left eye. He was about 6 weeks old when he arrived at the Nature Center and has been adjusting very well to his new home.

Natural History Fact Sheet:

Red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)

Description: True to its name, the hawk has a ruddy patch on each shoulder but is otherwise brown or barred brown and white. The tail has black and white alternating stripes.

Habitat: Usually live near rivers, preferring river's edge (riparian) forest habitat.

Range: Most of the Eastern United States and Canada. The population of red-shouldered hawks occurring in California and Oregon is an isolated one.

Food: Eats rodents and other small mammals, birds, reptiles and insects. Red-shouldered hawks are considered friends to the Central Valley farmers for their rodent-catching abilities.

Communication: A loud *kee-you, kee-you, kee-you, kee-you* when courting.

Nesting and Reproduction: Red-shouldered hawk males court females with a series of high-speed dives from above. As females watch, male birds soar high in the air, drop, then break the free-fall just before they hit the ground. Red-shouldered hawks likely mate for life, but the acrobatics are still performed each year.

Other Information: Red-shouldered hawks often "pass on" favorite nesting spots through the generations, with one breeding pair and their young nesting each year in the same spot. They construct a well-built nest of sticks in the crotch of a tree, laying 2-6 eggs. The eggs are incubated for about 28 days by the pair. Red-shouldered hawks may live for more than 20 years in the wild. Nest sites have been used for nearly 50 years. Red-shouldered hawks here are often called red-bellied hawks or chicken hawks.

