

Photo Quiz

by
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Answer to Photo Quiz in *Ontario Birds* 11 (3): **Broad-winged Hawk**. As the last sentence of the previous solution stated, this one is relatively easy, so much so that it may be difficult to say a lot about it.

Readers will recognize this bird soaring overhead as a broad-winged or buteo hawk. In fact, the short, broad tail is so striking and compelling that we are drawn to it, thus perhaps overlooking some other features useful in identification that might be needed given poorer light conditions or with an immature bird. So let's deal with the tail and go on to these more interesting features.

Clearly, our only other buteo with a boldly black and white barred tail is Red-shouldered Hawk. Adult Rough-legged Hawk has a somewhat barred tail but is hardly likely to be confused with these two species. Red-shouldered has three visible black bars separated by two white bars about half as wide whereas Broad-winged has two black and two white equally wide bars although just the distal white bar is clearly visible. Both species have narrow white terminal bars. The broader fan of Broad-winged tail and the pattern provide a much more striking "flag" than in Red-shouldered.

At a great distance or, as is often the case, a great height, the soaring shape of Broad-winged is quite distinctive; both the leading and trailing edges of the wings taper to

create a point. I call this species our only pointed-winged buteo. Swainson's Hawk wings are long and slender but they don't taper to points. Soaring Red-shouldered push their wings forward and the tips are broad and blunt. Red-tailed can look much like Broad-winged in soaring shape but have more "muscular" bulging wings and broad tips. These differences are not so distinct in gliding birds.

Two excellent overhead photos of Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks taken by Barry Cheriére are found on page 230 of our own *Ornithology in Ontario* and, taken together with this quiz photo, display all of the ventral features of "typical" soaring adults of these three congeners. The one and only distinctive feature of the underwings of adult Broad-winged Hawk is the broad black trailing edge on a basically plain whitish underwing; it exists to some extent in the other two but is much less bold. Both red-tail and red-shoulder have "busier" underwings with more things to look for. Note the dark leading edge or patagium and the dark commas on the red-tail and the roughly crescent shaped light windows at the base of the outer primaries of the red-shoulder.

The intense reddish barring on the breast of adults sets off a white throat presenting an appearance surprisingly similar to the same area

of light phase adult Swainson's Hawk. But don't be mesmerized by one feature. Quite apart from considerable differences in size, shape and manner of flight the Swainson's has very different and very striking underwings with light wing linings and dark remiges, a pattern opposite to most of our hawks.

Using this information and several good guides to hawk identification you need spend only several hundred hours at hawk migration lookouts to develop facility in distinguishing the buteos!

Now for something entirely different - our next quiz bird is a passerine.



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Editors' note:

Some suggested raptor readings.

Clark, W.S. and B.K. Wheeler. 1987. *A Field Guide to Hawks of North America.* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Dunne, P., D. Sibley, and C. Sutton. 1988. *Hawks in Flight.* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Palmer, R.S. (Editor). 1988. *Handbook of North American Birds. Volume 4. Diurnal Raptors, Part 1.* Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

Palmer, R.S. (Editor). 1988. *Handbook of North American Birds. Volume 5. Diurnal Raptors, Part 2.* Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.