

To lead off the 1987 *At a Glance* series, we see a soaring raptor as February's mystery bird. The hawk's broad wings and broad tail immediately identify it as a *Buteo*. Although accipiters may also exhibit a dark-and-light-banded tail, their longer tails and relatively shorter wings serve to eliminate members of that genus.

Concentration on the tail pattern clearly reveals the presence of at least two whitish crossbands that are narrower than the adjacent dark bands. At the same time, the tail is relatively long and constricted for a *Buteo* species. Only two Massachusetts buteos have white-banded tails -- adults of the Broad-winged and the Red-shouldered hawks.

At this point, examination of the underwings helps us distinguish between these two species. Clearly, the secondary feathers on the trailing edges of the wings are prominently checkered with light and dark. Additionally, there appears to be a pale, crescent-shaped marking at the base of the outer primary feathers. And finally, the forward thrust of the wings, which brings the leading edges of the wings to a plane with the tip of the bill, provides a distinctive and characteristic silhouette.

Collectively, these features point to the bird's identity as an adult Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*. The superficially similar Broad-winged Hawk would display only one wide, clearly observable white tail band on its rather short and ample tail. In Broad-wings, the light and dark bands are of nearly equal width. Also, the underwings of an adult Broad-wing are pale (whitish) with a distinct, thin, dark trailing border.

The pictured Red-shoulder (of the pale Florida race *alleni*) was photographed in the Everglades National Park.

Wayne R. Petersen



Red-shouldered Hawk

Photo by Wayne R. Petersen

AT A GLANCE

Photo by Roger Everett



Can you identify this bird?

Identification will be discussed in next issue's AT A GLANCE.



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