

The mystery bird for June should pose little problem at the family level. The bird is clearly a hawk or eagle of some kind. Its broad wings and ample tail immediately eliminate the pointed-winged falcons and kites and the long-tailed accipiters as possibilities. The dark chest, extensive whiteness of the wing linings and underparts, and relatively small head and beak serve to eliminate species such as the Osprey and both Bald and Golden eagles. Through deduction the soaring raptor must be a *buteo*.

In New England, five species of *buteos* occur with varying degrees of regularity. These include three breeding species: Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, and Red-tailed Hawk. The Rough-legged Hawk occurs only as a winter visitor, and the Swainson's Hawk occurs as a vagrant. In considering each of these species, it is important to evaluate shape and proportions of wings and tail, underwing and tail pattern, and the pattern of the underparts.

The most obvious features of the pictured *buteo* are its unmarked, light-colored wing linings, its dark chest and light throat, and its fairly long tail displaying a prominent subterminal band. Together these characteristics eliminate four of the five *buteo* possibilities. The familiar Red-tailed Hawk typically has a conspicuous white chest, light underwings that are broader and less pointed than in the mystery bird, a prominent carpal bar, and no obvious subterminal tail band. Adult plumaged Broad-winged and Red-shouldered hawks have conspicuously black-and-white banded tails and a less contrasting underwing pattern. In addition, Broad-winged Hawks at any age show a narrow black border to the trailing edge of the wings, while Red-shouldered Hawks exhibit a pale crescent, or "window," at the base of their primaries. The Rough-legged Hawk in its light morph usually has a conspicuous dark belly band, dark carpal crescents at the bend of the wing, a conspicuous white base to the tail,



and proportionately longer, less pointed wings. With these facts in mind, the bird in the photograph can only be an adult Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) in its light morph. In life, Swainson's Hawks soar with their wings slightly up-tilted, somewhat like harriers and Turkey Vultures, and when resting, they often perch on the ground. Their pointed wings give them a profile unique among North American *buteos*. The pictured Swainson's Hawk was photographed in Colorado by Wayne R. Petersen.

AT A GLANCE

Photo by Ralph Laurence. Courtesy of MAS.



Can you identify this bird?

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

We give avid birders something
few binocular and
telescope stores can.

Help.

We at the F.C. Meichsner Co. don't just talk to our customers about optical equipment. We *listen* to them, too.

And when you've been listening to people for 72 years, you can't help but learn a thing or two.

Like what birders want in a pair of binoculars—and what they don't.

So when you're about ready for a new spotting scope, binoculars, or repairs on equipment you already own, give us a call.

We accept most major credit cards, and we'd be happy to let you do most of the talking.



F.C. Meichsner Co.

182 Lincoln St., Boston, MA 02111

(617) 426-7092

