

The Cooper's Hawk is an increasingly common breeder and overwintering species in the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

The Cooper's Hawk is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need and a Species of Special Concern in New York State. However, NYS Breeding Bird Atlas data indicate a significant increase of the overall distribution, including in the Hudson River Valley in the past twenty years.

Identification

This woodland raptor is crow-sized, with rounded wings, a long brown/black banded tail, often rounded at the end, and a hooked bill. The adult is mainly gray/brown above, barred rusty brown below, with a strong contrast between the dark crown and paler nape and back. The immature is paler, with brown upperparts, and dark-streaked whitish or buffy underparts. The call is a rapid "ca-ca-ca-ca" with a harsh staccato quality.



Habitat

This species occupies deciduous and mixed forests as well as open woodland habitats such as woodlots and riparian woodlands. It generally prefers deep woods, using thick cover both for nesting and hunting. Openings, especially where hedgerows or windbreaks offer shelter for prey species, may also be used when foraging. It is tolerant of human disturbance and habitat fragmentation.

Food

The Cooper's Hawk primarily eats medium-sized birds, such as Mourning Doves, Northern Flickers, Blue Jays, and European Starlings, but sometimes it will eat small birds and some larger birds up to size of an adult Ruffed Grouse, and small ground-foraging mammals. It typically hunts from an inconspicuous perch or searches in flight. It is frequently attracted to birds at feeders, especially in the winter. Hunting territories range from 1 to 2 square miles.

Nesting

The nest is a broad, flat platform of sticks lined with bark chips and flakes built by the male in a dense patch of trees, usually deciduous. They also will use a modified squirrel or crow nest. It is generally located 20-60 feet up in a tree near the trunk or on a horizontal branch. A nesting territory must be at least 1.5 acres in size.

Threats

- Habitat destruction and fragmentation due to deforestation or development.
- Disturbance of nesting sites by human activity.
- Predation by raccoons.

Management Recommendations

- Minimize forest fragmentation.
- Avoid thinning tree stands in order to maintain the preferred density of cover.
- Avoid cutting and thinning of trees in an area of at least 2.4 acres around a known nest site.
- Protect known nest sites from human disturbance during nesting season.
- Reduce raccoon access to nests by placing raccoon guards on nest trees.

This species summary is adapted from Curtis et al. 2006, James 1984 and NatureServe 2008.

For additional information, see the following references:

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James, R. T. 1984. *Habitat Management Guidelines for Ontario's Forests: Nesting Accipiers, Buteos and Eagles*. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

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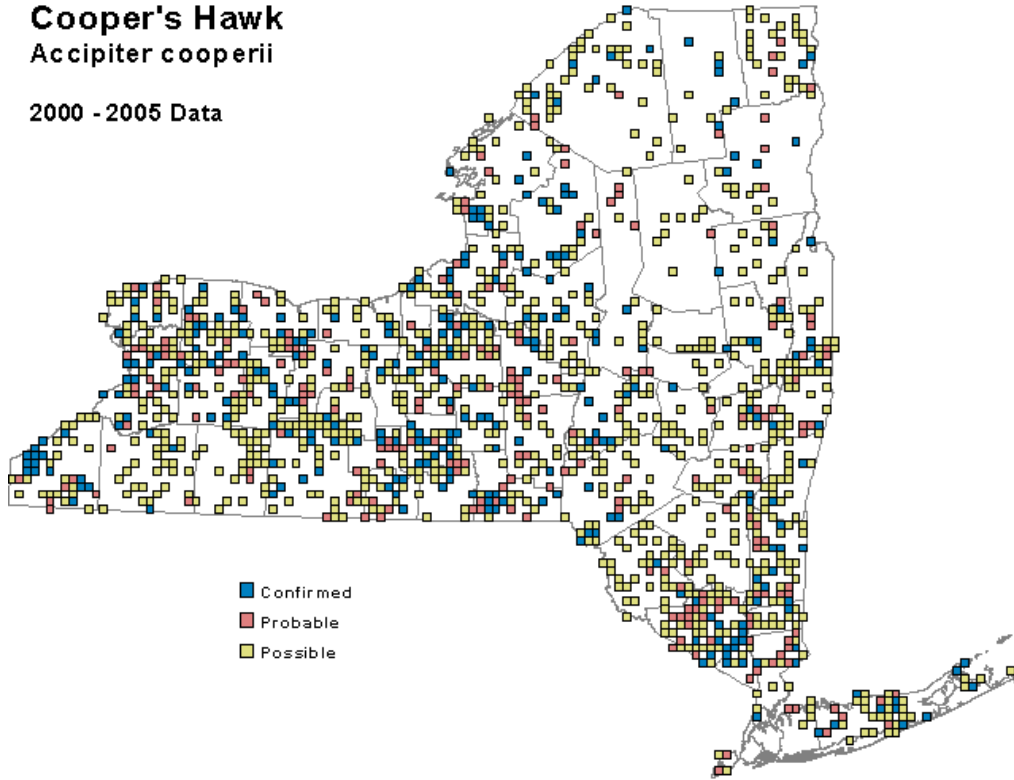
NatureServe. 2008. *NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life* [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

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NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

2000 - 2005 Data



Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

1980 - 1985 Data

