

## Broad-winged Hawk

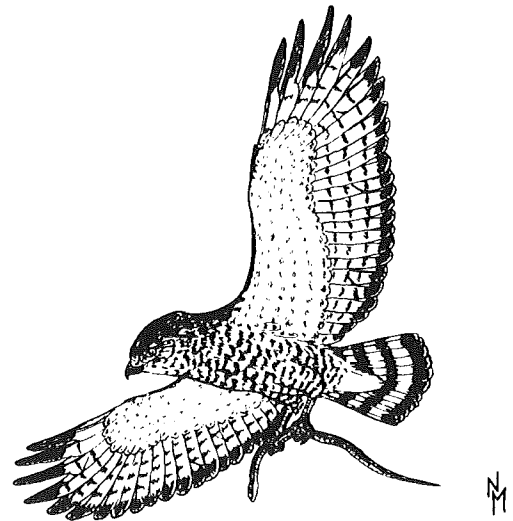
*Buteo platypterus*

Broad-winged Hawks nest from central Alberta east through Canada to Nova Scotia, and south to eastern Texas and Florida; they usually winter from Guatemala south to southern Brazil and Bolivia (AOU 1983). Individuals will sometimes winter in parts of the breeding range. Winter records of Broad-wings in Vermont are rare. One bird spent the winter of 1974-75 in Chester; another was seen in late December in South Strafford; and yet another was found in Tinmouth in early March (RVB, Winter 1973-83). An individual was observed on the Ferrisburg Christmas Bird Count in 1979 (December 15). The first Broad-wings return to Vermont each spring in early April, though spring flight usually peaks during the last two weeks of April. The most common migrant hawk in the fall, the Broad-wing far outnumbered the other buteos. Peak fall flights occur between the first week of September and the first week of October, usually around the second and third weeks of September.

These hawks occur in deciduous or mixed deciduous-coniferous forest, and are found in large tracts of forest (Rusch and Doerr 1969) that border on weedy fields or other forest openings (Titus and Mosher 1981). Bull (1974) suggested that extent of woodland is more important than its stage of growth. In the Adirondacks, the Broad-wing is the most common breeding hawk, inhabiting continuous tracts of mostly northern hardwood forest interspersed with conifer stands, open water, and marshes (Matray 1974). The species seems to prefer nesting in or near wet sites (Matray 1974; Titus and Mosher 1981).

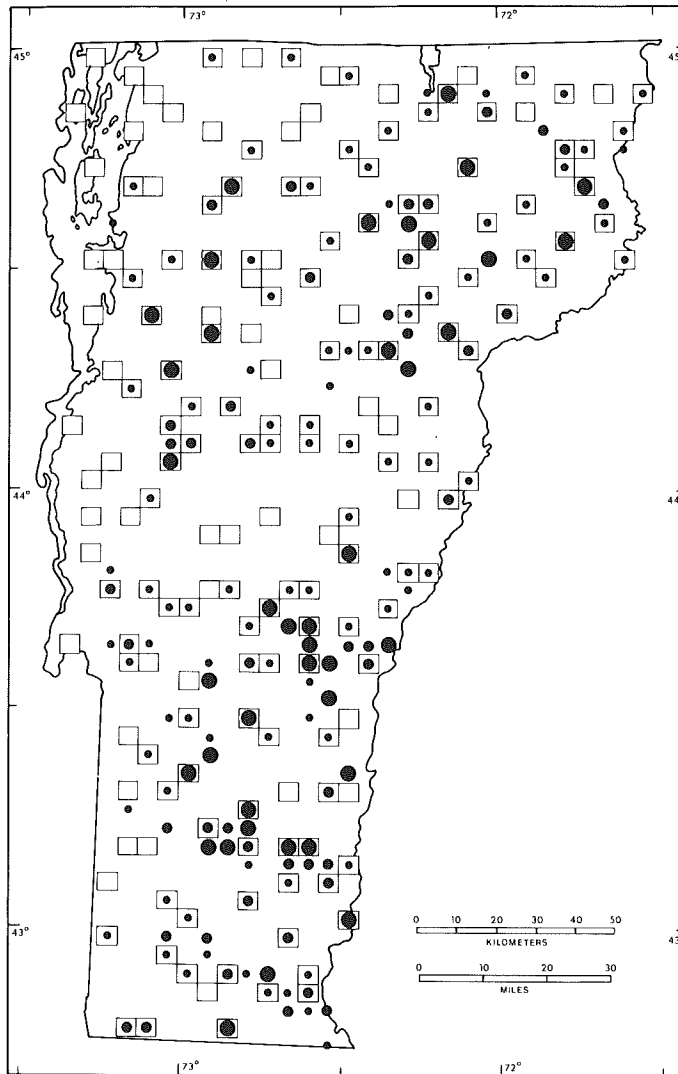
Although Broad-wings are sometimes observed soaring above the trees or woodland openings, they are most frequently located by their call, a high-pitched *ker-weeee* (Bent 1937), aimed especially at intruders near the nest.

Nest trees are often near forest openings or water (Titus and Mosher 1981). Matray



(1974) found 12 of 14 Adirondack nests to be in yellow birches, which appear to be Broad-wings' favored species of nesting tree. Of five Vermont Broad-wing nests, three were in paper birches (VINS nest record data). The stick nest is built in the main crotch of a tree 3.7-16.8 m (12-55 ft) above ground (Bull 1974). Three Vermont nest heights were 8, 9, and 11 m (25, 30, and 37 ft). Leafy twigs are often used as a lining for the nest. The clutch of 2 to 3 creamy white eggs, which are splotted with various shades of brown, may be incubated for 21 to 25 days (Bent 1937), or 28 days (Matray 1974). Only the female incubates. There are no Vermont egg dates; Bull (1974) reports April 27 through June 26 as egg dates in New York. Mean hatching dates in two years of study of Adirondack nests were June 13 and June 23 (Matray 1974). Vermont nestling dates are from June 2 to July 17 (five records). Bull (1974) reported May 30 through July 27 as nestling dates, and July 4 through August 16 as fledgling dates, in New York. Young are brooded by the female and begin feeding themselves at 28 to 30 days (Matray 1974). Broad-wings fledge at 29 to 30 days and begin hunting at 37 to 46 days, but are fed by adults until 50 to 56 days old (Matray 1974).

The diet consists of a variety of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and even crayfish. Mammal prey includes small ro-



**No. of priority blocks in which recorded**

TOTAL 126 (70%)

Possible breeding: 72 (57% of total)  
 Probable breeding: 29 (23% of total)  
 Confirmed breeding: 25 (20% of total)

**Physiographic regions in which recorded**

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	10	32	8.0
Green Mountains	42	78	33.3
North Central	17	89	13.4
Northeast Highlands	14	88	11.0
East Central	13	68	10.3
Taconic Mountains	9	56	7.0
Eastern Foothills	21	88	17.0

dents: chipmunks, red squirrels, mice, and shrews (Bent 1937). Errington and Breckenridge (1938) noted that Broad-wings feed on carrion. Grouse and snowshoe hare, mostly juveniles, were frequently taken by Broad-wings in Alberta (Rusch and Doerr 1969); these prey species were common in the study area, suggesting that Broad-wings select the most available prey. The contention that Broad-wings are opportunistic is also supported by the observation of Rusch and Doerr (1969) that fewer reptiles and amphibians are taken in more northerly regions where that prey base is smaller.

Broad-winged Hawks were found in all seven physiographic regions. Habitat studies

show that Broad-wings seem to prefer large tracts of contiguous forest for nesting; thus the scarcity of records in the Champlain Lowlands is expected. One-third of the confirmations were of nests with young, and one-fourth were of fledged young.

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