

EASTVIEWS 2020 COOPER'S HAWK



(1) **Immature Cooper's Hawk,**
Accipiter cooperii, © Dick Harlow

An immature Cooper's Hawk has been here at EastView since December 2019. He/she has found the various cottages that adjoin the field/meadow and South Pond to be a haven for his/her dinner each day. I am not sure whether this hawk is an immature male or female but feel its size suggests it may be an immature female. Therefore, I will call it a her instead of using dual gender terms.

One of the behavioral attributes of this species that I really like is its arrogance. Humans do not represent anything but an annoyance to this species. Sure, we can be a danger and it will react to any threat or attempt by humans to put the hawk's life in danger. But everything being on an equal plane, Cooper's could care less whether humans are near or far. A big difference is that the Sharp-shinned Hawk which looks similar but smaller, will shy or stay away from humans whenever possible.

This particular gal is smart! She is using EastView and the surrounding area as her winter home and hunting ground. Under tough climatic conditions, e.g. ice, snow, fluctuating temperatures and below zero cold, she as an immature without a lot of experience has managed to put/find herself a place of survival.

Some facts that are interesting about this species:

First, females are larger than males. A male Cooper's Hawk can be confused with a female Sharp-shinned Hawk, unless you know key characteristics of each species along with behavior.

Second, with the Mississippi River being the boundary, Cooper's that are seen east of the Mississippi tend to be larger, both males and females than Cooper's found west of the river.

MARCH 15 - 31, 2020 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

And third, Prey – Coopers are Accipiter's, known as bird hawks, that prey on Robin to Mourning Dove sized birds. Their menu includes all types of medium sized birds, e.g. jays, thrushes, woodpeckers, pigeons, doves, as well as nestling of their relative the Sharp-shinned Hawk. Being primarily a bird hawk does not take away from the fact that they have been known to go after small mammals such as snakes, frogs and lizards to supplement their diet.

The female, in all three pictures, is an immature as seen by the yellow eye in the picture. As she matures her eyes will change to red. The top of her head will change to a cap of black rather than brown. The back will change from brown to blue-gray and her chest will have reddish bars on a light background. If you notice the tail in this picture it is brown with black bars. In an adult it will be black bars on top of blue gray.



(2) Immature Cooper's Hawk,
Accipiter cooperii, © Dick Harlow

Because EastView has an open habitat you might think that a Cooper's Hawk likes such surroundings. Not true! This Cooper's (1-2) along with another immature (3) a few years ago have landed at EastView to their benefit. Winter is a tough time for birds of prey! Snow, ice, cold make it difficult to find food, especially their food. But if humans are doing their best to feed hungry songbirds, then as a bird of prey, you have found your savior in human kindness!

The habitat that they prefer are forests. Once spring comes this individual will leave us and journey to find some place closer to its instinctual habitat.

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(3) Immature Cooper's Hawk,
Accipiter cooperii, © Dick Harlow

This is an image (3), I was fortunate to capture here at EastView in the fall a few years ago. It shows the haughtiness, or "I am King/Queen of what I survey and don't get in my way." This is so typical of this species and particularly it is shown well by the look and attitude of this individual. You would not see this behavior of being out in the open and so close to humans, from a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a smaller accipiter, that looks similar to a Cooper's Hawk.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Coywolf seen and pups heard

Fox tracks

Weather Tidbits

Month of MARCH 1-31, 2020

[*All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).*](#)

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation 42.8 mm or 1.7 inches which is 0.5 inches below average.

Overcast Days: 15