

NOVEMBER 15- 30, 2021 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

ACCIPITERS

The genus *Accipiter* refers to three primary bird hawks! **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, **Cooper's Hawk** and Northern Goshawk; the bolded two are fairly local and I will be talking only about them.

The Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawk are woodland hawks. Their short, rounded wings and long tail allow them to maneuver through trees quite agilely and adeptly pursuing their winged prey. This doesn't mean that there aren't other items on their menu; but simply put their primary food item is other birds.

The **Sharp-shinned Hawk** is found throughout North America and Central America tending to move into Canada during the summer. Whereas the **Cooper's Hawk** is found primarily in the United States and moves into parts of southern Canada in the summer. The Northern Goshawk on the other hand is found as its name suggests primarily in Northern United States, Canada, Alaska, and the higher elevations of the Rocky Mountains.

For this note, I will focus primarily on the **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and show the comparative size and behavior of the more aggressive **Cooper's Hawk**.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK

Both adult **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and the **Cooper's Hawk** nest in woodlands. The young of these avian predators however have to learn to survive in more open areas before they can hunt successfully in the woods.

Fortunately, EastView is between various woodland areas where these hawks' nest. Because of that, at least more so with the Cooper's Hawk than the Sharp-shinned, their young use our community of bird feeders as a testing ground for their survival.



1. **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, *Accipiter striatus*, Immature, perched on a tree stake, EastView, Middlebury, VT. © Dick Harlow

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2. **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, *Accipiter striatus*,
Immature, perched on a tree stake, EastView,
Middlebury, VT. © Dick Harlow

The previous two images of an immature Sharp-shinned Hawk were taken on **September 9, 2021**. Whereas images, #3 and #4 of a rather arrogant go-getter Cooper's Hawk #4 was taken **September 14, 2016**, and #3 was taken **October 30, 2021**. One can see the size difference between images **3 & 4** and images **1 & 2**. The smaller Sharpie with its smaller head and body all tucked in gives a rather self-deprecating mood or shy and retiring attitude which is exactly the right way in which this species behaves.

However, in image **#3 & 4** we have a rather arrogant, purposeful, and slightly larger hawk. A Sharpie would not prance around on the ground when it missed a bird it had its eyes on whereas the Cooper's Hawk in **#4** so brazenly did.

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#3 Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*, Immature female, perched on our bird feeder pole, 2021 EastView, Middlebury, VT. © Dick Harlow

These three of the four photographs are of three separate individuals who have visited our back yard. Pictures **#1-3** occurred this year, whereas **#4** occurred 2016. Picture, **#3** and **#4** are of an immature female Cooper's because of its size, behavior, and plumage; whereas **#1** and **#2** are of a Sharpie, determined by size, shape, plumage and behavior.



4. Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*, Immature, on grass, EastView, Middlebury, VT. © Dick Harlow

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OBSERVATIONS

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MAMMALS

Coydogs - howling

Red Fox – visual and tracks in the snow

Meadow Vole – visual

Eastern Cottontail Rabbit – tracks in snow

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Average November Precipitation for Vermont = 3.15 inches.

Total precipitation for November was 84.2 mm or 3.3 inches. This is a 0.15 inch above average for the month.

Overcast Days 1-30: We had 18 days of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 12 days produced precipitation.