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## Northern Harrier

★
<u>Overview</u>
<a href="mailto:hern\_Harrier/overview">hern\_Harrier/overview</a>)

ID info (/guide/Northern Harrier/id)

<u>Life History</u> (/guide/Northern Harrier/lifehistory)

<u>Maps</u> (/guide/Northern Harrier/mapsrange) Sounds (/guide/Northern Harı

**◀** Listen

ID Info (/guide/Northern



(/guide/Northern Harrier/photogalle 4/4505647471)

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(/gwide/Nerthern-Harrier/photogallery/210801081)

Range map provided by

galledy/309048981)

Northern Harrier by Simon Richards (https://flic.kr/p/kabaNB)



#### Northern Harrier

Circus hudsonius

ORDER: Accipitriformes

FAMILY: Accipitridae

Harriers

Habitat

Grasslands

500

Mammals



Nesting

Ground



Behavior

**Aerial Dive** 



Conservation Low Concern

(/guide/Northe(/gulidæ/Neo/lifælt/gudidæ/Ned/lifælt/gudidæ/Neo/lif

#### BASIC DESCRIPTION

The Northern Harrier is distinctive from a long distance away: a slim, long-tailed hawk gliding low over a marsh or grassland, holding its wings in a V-shape and sporting a white patch at the base of its tail. Up close it has an owlish face that helps it hear mice and voles beneath the vegetation. Each gray-and-white male may mate with several females, which are larger and brown. These unusual raptors have a broad distribution across North America.

More ID Info (/guide/Northern\_Harrier/id)

### **∨** Cool Facts

Northern Harriers are the most owl-like of hawks (though they're not related to owls). They rely on hearing as well as vision to capture prey.

The disk-shaped face looks and functions much like an owl's, with stiff facial feathers helping to direct sound to the ears.

Need Bird ID Help? Try Merlin

(/guide/Northern Harrier/maps-range)

Year-round Breeding

Migration Nonbreeding

Birds of the World (https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/norhar2/cur/introduction? h

Explore Maps (/guide/Northern\_Harrier/maps-range)

### Find This Bird

In fall through spring, look for harriers in wide-open grasslands, marshes, or fields. You're most likely to notice Northern Harriers when they are flying. Note the low, slow, coursing flight style, the bird's V-shaped wing posture, and its white rump. During migration in the fall and spring, you can also see harriers high in the sky over mountain ridges and coastlines.

Juvenile males have pale greenish-yellow eyes, while juvenile females (http://birdAlphedt/Birds (https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/)
have dark chocolate brown eyes. The eye color of both sexes changes
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gradually to lemon yellow by the time they reach adulthood. Aguilucho de Hudson (Spanish)

Busard des marais (French)

- Male Northern Harriers can have as many as five mates at once, though most have only one or two. The male provides most of the food for his mates and their offspring, while the females incubate the eggs and brood the chicks.
- Northern Harriers hunt mostly small mammals and small birds, but they are capable of taking bigger prey like rabbits and ducks. They sometimes subdue larger animals by drowning them.
- Northern Harrier fossils dating from 11,000 to 40,000 years ago have been unearthed in northern Mexico.
- The oldest Northern Harrier on record was a female, and at least 15 years, 4 months old when she was captured and released in 2001 by a bird bander in Quebec. She was banded in New Jersey in 1986.

# Compare with Similar Species

Click on an image to compare



Rough-legged Hawk Juvenile light morph

Rough-legged Hawk Adult male light morph

Cooper's Hawk <u>Adult</u> (/guide/Northern\_Harrier/species{/guide/Northern\_Harrier/speci compare/60324921)

compare/71545691)

compare/71545631)

## Looking for ID Help?

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# Species in This Family

<u>Hawks, Eagles, and Kites (/guide/browse/taxonomy/Accipitridae)</u> (Order: Accipitriformes, Family: Accipitridae (/guide/browse/taxonomy/Accipitridae))

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Swallow-tailed Kite (/guide/Swallowtailed Kite/overview)

Hook-billed Kite (/ billed Kite/ov

Browse Species in This Family (/guide/browse/taxonomy/Accipitridae)

### More to Read



I Found A Baby Bird. What Do I Do?

Living Bird Magazine A Miracle Of Abundance As 20,000 Whimbrel Take Refuge On A Tiny Island

(https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/i-found-ababy-bird-what-do-i-do/)



Living Bird Magazine At Orchards And Vineyards, Birds Are Outperforming Pesticides

(https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/a-miracle-ofabundance-as-20000-whimbrel-take-refuge-on-atiny-island/)



There's A Bird Nesting Near My House. What Should I Do?

(https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/at-orchards-

and-vineyards-birds-are-outperforming-pesticides/)(https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/theres-a-

Feeding Hummingbirds

bird-nesting-near-my-house-what-should-i-do/)



What's Going On When I See Little Birds Going After A Big Bird?

(https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/feedinghummingbirds/)

(https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/sometimes-isee-little-birds-going-after-a-big-bird-why-do-theydo-this/)



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