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White-tailed Kite

Life History

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White-tailed Kite

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Habitat
Grasslands



Food
Mammals



Nesting
Tree



Behavior
Hovering



Conservation
Low Concern

Habitat



White-tailed Kites are common in savannas, open woodlands, marshes, desert grasslands, partially cleared lands, and cultivated fields. They tend to avoid heavily grazed areas.

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Food



The White-tailed Kite eats mainly small mammals, but it also eats birds, lizards, and insects on rare occasions. It hunts by facing into the wind and hovering up to 80 feet above the ground while it scans the ground for movement. It dives down to grab prey, feet down and wings held up.

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Nesting

NEST PLACEMENT



White-tailed Kites typically nest in the upper third of trees that may be 10–160 feet tall. These can be open-country trees growing in isolation, or at the edge of or within a forest. Both sexes help choose the nest site; the female

may build the nest herself or both sexes may participate.

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[Nesting](#)

Clutch Size: 4 eggs

[Behavior](#)

Number of Broods: 1 brood

[Conservation](#)

Egg Length: 1.5-1.8 in (3.8-4.5 cm)

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White-tailed Kite

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Egg Width:

1.2-1.3 in (3.0-3.3 cm)

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Incubation Period: 30-32 days

Nestling Period: 35-38 days

Egg Description: White overall, spotted with dark brown.

Condition at Hatching: Helpless and covered in tan or yellowish down.

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Behavior



While hunting, the White-tailed Kite hovers up to 80 feet off the ground and then drops straight down onto prey items with talons out. They can hold a stationary position in midair by facing into the wind and fluttering their wings, a behavior so characteristic of these birds it's called kiting. White-tailed Kites maintain territories, though they tend to tolerate nearby kites and are not as strongly territorial as other raptors. On rare occasions territory holders or an intruding kite might be met and challenged in flight where the two birds lock talons and tumble towards the ground, pulling apart just before the ground. White-tailed Kites perform ritualized courtship displays in which a male offers prey to a female prior to egg laying. In an often spectacular aerial exchange, the female flies up to meet the male, turns upside-down, and grasps the prey. Pairs stay together during the breeding season, but may or may not pair up in successive seasons.

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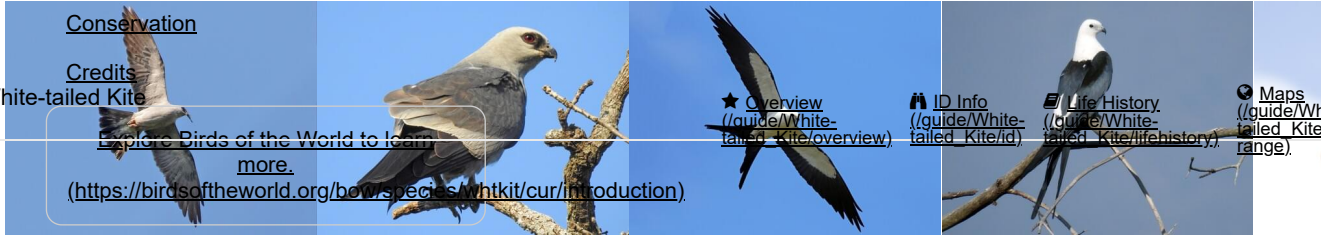
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[Swallow-tailed Kite \(/guide/Swallow-tailed_Kite/overview\)](/guide/Swallow-tailed_Kite/overview)

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Living Bird Magazine
Raptors and Rat
Poison

(<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/raptors-and-rat-poison/>)



Project FeederWatch
Tricky Bird IDs

(http://feederwatch.org/learn/tricky-bird-ids/?__hstc=75100365.35f088ab85560b0435048d679b9f261b.1613497416042.1615245085214.1616627537204.6&__hssc=75100365.2.1616627537204.6&__hsfp=3562160313)



Bird ID Skills:
Behavior

(<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/bird-id-skills-behavior/>)



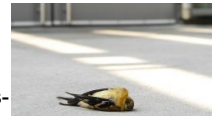
Living Bird Magazine
They Had Feathers: Is the World Ready to See Dinosaurs as They Really Were?

(<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/they-had-feathers-is-the-world-ready-to-see-dinosaurs-as-they-really-were-2/>)



Living Bird Magazine
Naturalist's Notebook: Falcon vs. Kite

(<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/naturalists-notebook-falcon-vs-kite/>)



Why Birds Hit Windows—and How You Can Help Prevent It

(<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/>)

