If you spot a bird of prey in Montana, you are most likely looking at a Red-tailed Hawk. Amarillo is ZooMontana's resident Red-tailed Hawk! Amarillo has been living at ZooMontana since 2021. He was injured in the wild and now relies on human care to meet all his needs. Their distinctive red tail is the easiest way to identify a Red-tailed Hawk. But they don't have this unique feature their entire lives; when they are very young, their tail is mostly white with brown lines along them. Once they have reached about a year old, they will molt their feathers and the new ones they grow in will be that distinct red color. In the bird of prey world, females are usually larger than males, but for most species, they look very similar. You can find these hawks all throughout the United States and Canada, and into Mexico and Central America.



Here are some of their incredible adaptations:

- They are diet generalists. This means that they can eat a lot of different things like small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Being able to eat a lot of different things means that food is easier to find since there are so many options.
- They mostly communicate through their body language. If their head is held high this might be defensive; if their head is held low, this can be a sign of submission. A very comfortable hawk will shake out their feathers and might bring up one leg into their body.
- The sounds you hear in movies for eagles, are actually the sound that Red-tailed hawks make!

Color this Red-tailed Hawk in midflight.



What makes a raptor a raptor?

Raptors or Birds of Prey are a special type of carnivorous bird that catches their prey live, using their feet. Raptors have 3 major characteristics/adaptations that they share:



Hooked Beaks:
used to tear their meat into bite-size pieces



Strong Talons:
used to catch and hold on to their prey items



Keen Eyesight:
used to locate prey. They can easily see a mouse a football field away in a lot of detail!

Raptor Who?

Based on the information you have learned, which one of these three birds is not a raptor? Why?

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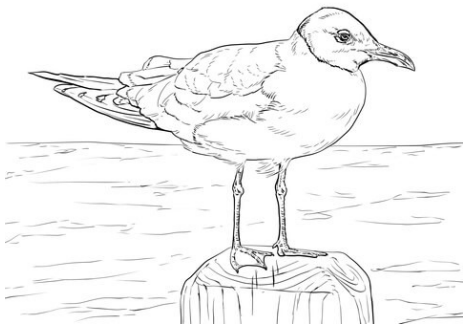
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