Threatened and Endangered Species in Forests of Wisconsin

This publication was produced in 2000 as a joint project of:
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry and the Bureau of Endangered Resources,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
The Nature Conservancy,
International Paper,
Stora Enso and
Plum Creek.
For more information, contact
Eunice.Padley@dnr.state.wi.us
and reference publication number FR-174

WISCONSIN
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

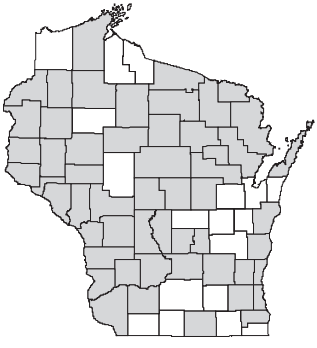
Red-shouldered Hawk

(Buteo lineatus)

Federal Status: Not Listed
State Status: Threatened

Description: The red-shouldered hawk is a medium-sized raptor of the *Buteo* group. Adult males (17 to 23 inches long) are slightly smaller than adult females (19 to 24 inches long). It has a rusty-red shoulder marking and barred, rusty to reddish underparts. Its flight feathers have distinct black and white bars above. When viewed from below, the spread wings display a translucent, crescent-shaped patch. The hawk's grayish tail is marked by several wide dark bars alternating with narrow white bars and a white tip.

Habitat: In central Wisconsin, red-shouldered hawks use large (>200 acres), unfragmented tracts of mature (>50 years old), moderately moist forest. Preferred habitat contains numerous large trees. The majority of nests are found in red oaks. Nest tree diameters range from 18 to 35 inches. Nests are usually placed near the main trunk in a crotch 40 to 60 feet above ground.

Often the same nest tree is used year after year. Along the Mississippi River, red-shouldered hawks use medium to mature floodplain or riparian forests as nesting habitat. These forests are often dominated by 45- to 70-year-old silver maples and/or cottonwoods. Red-shouldered hawk nest sites along the Mississippi are usually associated with still water, backwater pools, open marshes, temporary waterways or the confluence of two streams. These wetlands provide important foraging habitat where frogs and crayfish occur.

Forestry Considerations: Forestry practices that maintain an average canopy closure of 70% or more would be beneficial to red-shouldered hawks. An aspen component (1- to 5-acre patches on a 55-year rotation) also would be beneficial. Cutting should not isolate an active nest tree and disturbance (including road construction and logging) should be minimized within 300 feet of a nest from March through July 15. Use of *Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality* should be followed, especially the provision of a buffer zone along riparian corridors.