

SHORT-TAILED HAWK

Buteo brachyurus

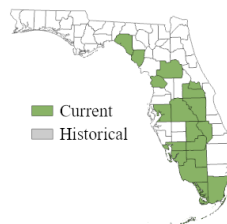
Order: Accipitriformes

Family: Accipitridae

FNAI Ranks: G4G5/S1

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: none



Description: Small, crow-sized hawk with two distinctive color morphs. Both are dark from above, but undersides are either predominantly all white or predominantly all black, especially on throat, breast, belly, and wing linings. Dark morph (more common by a ratio of 4:1) predominantly black with white at base of primary feathers contrasting with black wing linings and darker secondaries. Tails in both morphs have broad brown bands on a gray-brown background. Subterminal band is widest. Juveniles more streaked or dappled than adults, with light buff lower sides and tail bars of equal width. Soaring birds tend to hold wingtips up; long wings reach tail when perched.

Similar Species: No other small Florida hawk has either pure white or jet-black underparts. Pale south Florida form of red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) has lightly banded tail, reddish brown or gray belly, and pale head. Broad-winged hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) has large wings and banded tail but also is reddish brown or gray below.

Habitat: Found in cypress swamps, sand pine scrub, tropical hammocks, temperate hardwood and pine forests near water, and mangroves. Often seen soaring, especially over open prairies and pastures. Nests typically in dense or open stands of tall trees in both flooded or upland locations, selecting tall, straight trees near edges of fields or small clearings within forests. May spend much of day aloft searching for food (chiefly small birds and some rodents) from heights exceeding 2000 ft. (600 m).

Seasonal Occurrence: Found year-round in Florida, but nearly all Florida birds appear to spend the winter south of Lake Okeechobee.

Florida Distribution: Small resident population in south Florida (especially

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mangrove and cypress swamps of Everglades National Park). Found in northern portions of Florida during summer months, especially along Gulf coast to Wakulla County (infrequent sightings farther west). Summer records rare and irregular northward to Alachua, Clay, and Flagler counties. High densities reported for area surrounding Fisheating Creek (Glades County). Very rare in Panhandle.

Range-wide Distribution: Tropical species found from northern Argentina to Mexico, reaching U.S. predictably only in Florida (though considered casual in Texas).

Conservation Status: Florida population (= U.S. population) is very small, with about 400 birds concentrated mainly in southern part of state. Although this species is found in other tropical lowlands, Florida's population has probably been isolated for hundreds or even thousands of years. Effects of loss of habitat to urbanization and deforestation are poorly known, but studies suggest that development poses a threat. Florida rehabilitators have treated birds for gunshot wounds and collisions with cars.

Protection and Management: Maintain land in natural state. Prevent cypress logging, particularly along Fisheating Creek.

References: Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Rodgers et al. (eds.) 1996, Stevenson and Anderson 1994.



