

Endangered Latin American Raptors

Crowned Eagle - *Wing span:* approx. 69 inches (almost 6 feet). *Body mass:* 6 to 7 pounds.

As is true of many of the world's tropical or mainly tropical eagles, Crowned Eagles (*Harpyhalieetus coronatus*) do not migrate. A relatively large, slaty-grey, bird of prey, the species has long, broad wings and a relatively short tail. Crowned Eagles feed mainly on mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and carrion. In Argentina, armadillos figure largely in their diet. Crowned Eagles inhabit lowland, semi-open landscapes in seasonally dry areas. Adults build a large platform stick nest in a tree or ravine, in which the female lays a single egg. Although the Crowned Eagle has a large range that includes southern Brazil and northern and central Argentina, as well as Bolivia and Paraguay, it is common nowhere (indeed, it is called the Solitary Crowned Eagle by many), and has a small, fragmented, and declining global population estimated at between 350 and 1,500 individuals. The Crowned Eagle is considered **Endangered** globally.

Land-use change and hunting are the greatest threats to this eagle. In Brazil both nesting and feeding areas are being converted to mechanized agriculture and intensive cattle ranching. Shooting and deliberate disturbance also are problematic in Argentina, as are collisions with powerlines and drowning in watering tanks for livestock. Illegal trade also may be a problem in Argentina. Monitoring the distribution and abundance of the species needs to occur, as do studies of the factors that currently limit population growth.

The species often soars, and seeks prey both in flight and while perched.

Cuban Kite - *Wing span:* 31 inches. *Body mass:* a little over half a pound, superficially resembles a Broad-winged Hawk.

The island endemic Cuban Kite (*Chondrohierax wilsonii*), a species that was once fairly widespread in Cuba, now occurs in only a small, eastern part of the island.

Recently identified as a separate species, the Cuban Kite's closest living relative is the widespread and abundant Hook-billed Kite, a largely Neotropical species that ranges throughout most of coastal Mexico, Central America, and both northern and central South America. Like most island endemics, the Cuban Kite is non-migratory. The species is considered **Critically Endangered** globally.

The Cuban Kite occurs in relatively undisturbed, montane gallery forest, where it feeds mainly on tree snails and slugs in the forest understory. Breeding pairs build a flimsy stick nest in which the female lays one or two eggs. Land-use change and forest degradation resulting from logging and woodland conversion to agriculture have affected the species decline. In addition, Cuban Kites are sometimes persecuted by farmers who believe the kite feeds on their chickens and ducks. The collection of tree snails for food also may be affecting the decline. As a result of these threats the total global population is now estimated at between 50 and 250 individuals. On-the-ground conservation efforts include surveys of the existing populations and talks with local communities to reduce wood-cutting and to eliminate shooting.

The Cuban Kite spends most of its time within the forest canopy still hunting and hopping among branches in search of tree snails. Cuban Kites rarely soar above the forest canopy.

Grey-backed Hawk - *Wing span:* approx. 43 inches. They seldom soar.

Grey-backed Hawks (*Leucopternis occidentalis*) are medium sized, grey-headed, black-and-white raptors that occur only in Ecuador and Peru. The species is closely related to the more widespread and far more common White Hawk of Central and South America. Grey-backed Hawks are not known to migrate. The species inhabits both dry deciduous and humid evergreen forests, but is more common in the latter. Grey-backed Hawks are in rapid population decline, most likely due to land-use change and forest fragmentation. There are estimated to be between 350 and 1,500 individuals overall. The species is considered **Endangered** globally.

Grey-backed Hawks feed mainly on snakes, lizards, crabs, rodents, and small birds, as well as on earthworms,

frogs and large insects. Little is known about its breeding ecology. Its hunting behavior, too, is little studied. Current principal threats include land-use change associated with forest loss. Shooting also may play a role.

Gundlach's Hawk - *Wing span:* approx. 30-32 inches (about 2.5 feet). *Body mass:* estimated to range from about three-quarters of a pound to a pound-and-a-half, with females being decidedly larger than males.

Gundlach's Hawks (*Accipiter gundlachi*) are medium sized forest-dwelling accipiters slightly larger than and closely related to Cooper's Hawks. An island endemic found only on Cuba, the species feeds mainly, if not entirely on birds, with the smaller males taking smaller birds including many passerines, and the larger females taking larger birds such as pigeons and chickens. Although never common, the species is now rare and local. Current estimates place the global population at fewer than 400 individuals. Overall, the ecology of the Gundlach's Hawk is thought to be similar to its continental cousin the Cooper's Hawk. Threats include land-use change resulting from logging, and woodland conversion to agriculture. The species also is persecuted as Cuba's most prominent "chicken hawk." On-the-ground conservation needs to include public awareness. The species is considered **Endangered** globally.

Like other forest-dwelling accipiters Gundlach's Hawk hunts mainly from a perch. The species routinely soars above the canopy at mid-day, apparently to advertise its territory.

Harpy Eagle - *Wing span:* approx. 74 inches (more than 6 feet) *Body mass:* 9 to 16 pounds.

Along with the Philippine Eagle, the Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) ranks as the largest forest-dwelling eagle in the world. The species is found as far north as southern Mexico, and as far south as Brazil, Paraguay, and northeastern Argentina. Harpy Eagles are most numerous in large contiguous expanses of lowland tropical forest. The species does not migrate. Although it is still relatively common in Amazonian forests of Peru and Brazil where pairs nest as close as three kilometers (or about two miles) apart, forest destruction is reducing both their breeding and

feeding areas markedly, as well as exposing the large birds to increased human persecution. With a global population estimated at 20,000 to 50,000, the species is considered **Near Threatened** globally.

Harpy Eagles are extraordinarily powerful birds of prey with oversized beaks. They catch and feed upon large tree-dwelling mammals including monkeys and sloths, as well as on large birds such as curassows, seriemas, and macaws. Pairs build large stick nests in which the female lays clutches of one to three eggs, but only in alternating years, as rearing chicks can take more than twelve months. Most hunting is done from perches within the canopy. This species rarely soars above the canopy.

White-collared Kite - *Wing span:* 40 inches. *Body mass:* about one pound.

The White-collared Kite (*Leptodon forbesi*) is a largish mostly bicolored blackish-and-white kite. Closely related to, and very similar to, the more widely distributed Grey-headed Kite, the species occurs only in eastern Brazil in a small severely-fragmented lowland forest. Logging and hunting are the two most significant threats. Its feeding ecology is largely unknown, but it likely preys on insects and small reptiles. Its breeding ecology, too, is largely unknown, but it almost certainly builds stick nests. Overall, the species is seldom seen.

The world population is estimated at from 50 to 250 individuals. White-collared Kites are currently considered **Critically Endangered** globally.

Ridgway's Hawk - *Wing span:* 30 inches (about 2.5 feet). *Body mass:* slightly less than 1 pound.

Ridgway's Hawk (*Buteo ridgwayi*) is a non-migratory island endemic that now occurs only in a small part of the Dominican Republic on the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola. In the past it also occurred in Haiti on the western part of the island. A smallish buteo that most closely resembles the Red-shouldered Hawk, the Ridgway's Hawk is a forest- and broken-forest-dwelling species that feeds mainly on snakes and lizards, and less commonly on small mammals and centipedes. It builds a stick nest and lays clutches of two or three eggs. Its numbers are in steep decline. The world

population is estimated at 160-240 individuals. The species is considered **Critically Endangered** globally.

The greatest threat to Ridgway's Hawk is deforestation associated with livestock farming and coffee plantations. Although it rarely feeds on poultry, local peoples believe that it does, which fosters persecution. Mainly a perch hunter, the species soars occasionally.

Why endangered Latin American raptors?

Many of the raptors migrating past Hawk Mountain in autumn travel as far as Central and South America. Many of those that do, interact with the raptors that live in Latin America year round. Although most species of Latin American raptors are doing fine, several of them, including the seven species described here, are listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as *Critically Endangered*, *Endangered*, *Vulnerable*, *Threatened*, or *Near-Threatened* globally. We display silhouettes of these endangered raptors on the Silhouette Trail to highlight their conservation status and to describe the factors that threaten them. Hawk Mountain works with conservation partners Latin America, as well as elsewhere in the world, in an attempt to learn more about endangered raptors and how we can work to protect them.

The specially commissioned images on the trail this winter and spring include seven endangered Latin American birds of prey: the Crowned Eagle, the Cuban Kite, the Grey-backed Hawk, the Gundlach's Hawk, the Harpy Eagle, the White-collared Kite, and the Ridgway's Hawk, all of which can be seen along the Silhouette Trail.

**We hope you enjoyed your visit.
Thank you for your support!**



Silhouette Trail


LATIN AMERICAN RAPTORS



Winter - Spring 2017

The Hawk Mountain's newest education venue, the Silhouette Trail, is an ADA approved, quarter-mile path that takes you from the Sanctuary's Trail Head to the South Lookout. This winter and spring, the trail features life-size, in-flight silhouettes of seven of Latin America's endangered birds of prey.

Visit us at:

www.hawkmountain.org

 [facebook.com/hawkmountainsanctuary](https://www.facebook.com/hawkmountainsanctuary)

  @hawk_mountain