

## **Sky Hunters Environmental Education**

### **Commuting on the Wing - Raptor Migration Vocabulary**

**Accipiter** – a type of hawk with short, rounded wings and a long tail, that dwells in woodland and preys on smaller birds caught on the wing. North America has three species of accipiters: the Northern Goshawk, Cooper’s Hawk, and Sharp-shinned Hawk.

**Adaptation** – a change in a living thing that better fits it for survival in its environment.

**Aerial hunting** – a hunting method in which a raptor is already airborne when it begins pursuit of its intended prey.

**Aerie** – the nest of a large bird located high in a tree or on a cliff or mountaintop.

**Allopreening** – mutual preening between mates or between adults and sibling, but rarely between unrelated individuals.

**Beak** – the bill of a bird, especially the hooked bill of a bird of prey that is adapted for tearing. Interchangeable with bill.

**Bill** – the beak of a bird, used for food gathering, preening, nest building and defense of a territory. Interchangeable with beak. Adapted to the type of bird.

**Behavior** – the way an animal acts often in response to something in its environment; an inherited pattern of automatic responses (such as courtship or nesting).

**Binocular vision** – a way of seeing using both eyes looking straight ahead that results in a three-dimensional view produced by overlap of vision.

**Bird of prey** – a predatory bird that uses its hooked beak and sharp talons to catch and eat other animals; also called a Raptor.

**Brancher** – fledgling-aged raptor that ventures from the confines of the nest onto nearby branches or to the ground, exercising its wings before fledging.

**Brood** – the baby birds that hatch from a clutch of eggs.

**Buteo** – a type of hawk with broad wings and short tail, that soars and often preys on rodents. There are 12 species in North America. Such as the Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson’s Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk and Broad-winged Hawk.

**Camouflage** – concealment by blending in with the background.

**Carnivore** – a flesh-eating animal, usually a predator.

**Carrion** – a dead animal or rotting flesh used as food by some animals such as vultures.

**Cere** – a fleshy, featherless area around the nostrils of raptors.

**Clutch** – the eggs laid by a female bird in one nesting period.

**Cones** – cells in the eye that work best in strong light and are used to see color and form sharp images.

**Convergent evolution** – when two unrelated animal groups fill the same role, or niche, in an environment and evolve similar adaptations.

**Crest** – slightly longer feathers on the head or neck that when raised form a pointed tuft.

**Carrying capacity** – a limit to the number of each species that can live in a habitat.

**Crepuscular** –active during twilight hours; in the early morning and early evening.

**Depth perception** – the ability to see an object and at the same time determine how far away it is.

**DDT** – a powerful combination of chemicals developed to kill insect pests that builds up in the environment and poisons many types of animals – see Pesticide

**Diurnal** –active by day and sleeps at night.

**Ecosystem** (short for ecological system) - an ecological community together with its physical environment, considered as a unit. All ecosystems are "open" systems in the sense that energy and matter are transferred in and out. Example: The Earth as a single ecosystem constantly converts solar energy into myriad organic products, and has increased in biological complexity over time.

**Environment** – the total of all factors (such as temperature, humidity, light, rainfall and other living things) that affect a plant or animal.

**Falcon** – a long-winged bird of prey specializing in taking other birds in mid-air. There are seven species in North America, four of which occur in California: the Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, American Kestrel, and Merlin.

**Falcon tooth** – a notch in the upper part of the hooked beak of a falcon used to sever the spinal cord of prey.

**Fledgling** – a young bird that has left the nest and is still dependent on the parent birds.

**Flyway** – a broad corridor or path in which animal movement occurs. There are four major flyways in North America, Pacific, Central, Mississippi and Atlantic.

**Glide** – to coast a short distance (usually from a higher point to a lower point) with the wings held outstretched but without flapping.

**Hacking** – When humans take eggs from a wild nest and place them in an incubator or in the nest of a related species for hatching. The young birds that result from these eggs are then put in boxes in the right habitat and later released. A way of reintroducing raptors into areas where they no longer breed.

**Hawking** – the act of catching prey in flight.

**Habitat** – the area or type of environment where plants or an animals naturally live or occur. A living area used by certain species that has a limit to the number of each species it can support, (carrying capacity). A habitat provides plants and animals with a place to find food, water, shelter, and a safe place to raise young.

**Hibernation** – to pass the winter in a dormant or torpid state; a time of inactivity; “winter sleep” by many rodents and other prey animals.

**Hover** – to fly in one place by beating the wings and spreading the tail.

**Kettle** – term used to describe a “flock” of raptors, usually during migration.

**Mantling** – standing over a fresh kill with wings spread, to hide and protect it.

**Migrate** – to fly from one area or climate to another for feeding or breeding.

**Mob** – to pester a predator by swooping at it and making a great deal of noise, usually done by a mixed flock of small birds with the intent to drive the predator away.

**Molt** – the process of shedding feathers and growing new ones.

**Nictitating membrane** – inner or third eyelid in birds, reptiles, and some mammals that helps to keep the eye moist and clean. To nictitate means to wink.

**Niche** – the role an organism plays in a community, how it interacts with the environment and other organisms. An animal’s habitat is its home, its niche is its job.

**Nocturnal** –active at night and sleeps during the day.

**Pellet** – a round mass of tightly packed, indigestible material such as fur, feathers and bones formed in the stomach of many different kinds of birds and regurgitated several hours after eating.

**Perch hunting** – detecting prey from a perch and then becoming airborne to catch it. Perch and pounce hunting style.

**Pesticide** – a chemical used to kill pests such as insects or rats and mice.

**Plumage** – all the feathers that cover a bird's body.

**Predator** – an animal that hunts, kills, and eats other animals.

**Preening** – the grooming action of a bird in which individual feathers are drawn through the bill to restore neatness and waterproofing. The bill is rubbed across the oil (uropygial) gland, located on the top region of the tail, and supplies waterproofing oil for the feathers.

**Prey** – an animal that is hunted, killed, and eaten by other animals.

**Primaries** – the long flight feathers on the tip of the wing, originating from the wrist.

**Ridge lift** – the upward movement of wind off a mountainside or high hill.

**Rousing** – cleansing action of a bird in which all contour feathers are elevated, wings and tail are held loosely, and the bird vigorously shakes itself.

**Raptor** – a predatory bird that uses strong feet and sharp talons to catch and carry prey, has a hooked bill to kill and tear prey, and is carnivorous by.

**Resident** – an animal that stays in the same area year round without migrating.

**Roost** – to settle for rest or sleep; a place where birds rest or sleep.

**Scavenger** – an animal that eats dead things.

**Soar** – to fly without flapping wings, to ride the moving air on outstretched wings.

**Stoop** – a steep, fast dive through the air in pursuit of prey.

**Talon** – the long, sharp, curved claw of a bird of prey.

**Territory** – an area used for hunting or nesting that is defended by an animal.

**Thermal** – a rising column of warm air.

**Updraft** – a wind going up over an obstacle.

**Wing Chord** – distance on a folded wing from the wrist to the tip of the longest primary.

**Wing span** – the distance from the tip of one outstretched wing to the tip of the other outstretched wing.

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