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***The northern version of the Red-shouldered Hawk has richer red and a darker head than the Florida version.
(Photo 2)***

DEFAULT HAWKS

"Default" has always had the worst kind of negative connotation: If you "defaulted" (verb) on your loan or mortgage payment, the obligation would then be in "default" (noun) and you would be in danger of becoming homeless. But with the advent of computers (noun) and computing (verb) the word "default" has taken on a whole new, and even positive, meaning.

One can now select for his or her computer operations the preferred, or at least fallback, web browser, photo viewer, word processing program, ie: the "default" program for that particular computer usage. Thus, "default" now has a very negative and a very positive definition, depending on context.

As one who spends half the year in the Northeast and half the year in Florida, it occurs to me that when it comes to hawks, there is a different "default" (positive definition) hawk in each area. If one drives along a highway or road way, and sees a hawk perched on a wire or distant tree in the northeast, it will most likely be a Red-tailed Hawk; in Florida, under the same circumstances, the hawk will most likely be a Red-shouldered Hawk. Both species occur in both areas, but Red-tails are not nearly as common in Florida as they are farther north, and Red-shoulders are not nearly as common in the northeast as they are in Florida. Thus, I submit, the "default hawk" designation applies to Red-shouldered Hawks in Florida, and the "default hawk" designation applies to Red-tailed Hawks in the northeast.

But there are plumage variations between Florida Red-shouldered and the more northern versions of the species. In Florida the default Red-shouldered Hawk is paler, with a light gray head, (photo 1) while the more northern version is a richer red with a darker head, (photo 2), and sometimes, when northern Red-shoulders fly south for the winter, the two versions can be seen together, side by side. (photo 3) A pair of Florida Red-shouldered Hawks in nuptial flight can be quite spectacular, (photo 4) and a distant adult "shoulder" carrying a snake displays the colorful top-side view of the species, with its narrow tail bands. (photo 5)

Red-tailed Hawks are very aptly named, as the adults have unmistakable bright red tails. However, they also have distinctive "belly bands," a broad dark belt across the midsection that distinguishes Red-tails from virtually all other species of hawks. (photo 6) While the juvenile Red-tailed does not have a red tail, it does have the distinctive "belly band." (photo 7) Out west, Red-tails can be even more colorful. (Western subspecies Red-tailed Hawk, rufous form, photo 8 **CORRECTED**)

Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawks are sometimes confused with juvenile Cooper's Hawks. Apart from the different shape, (the Cooper's is generally more slender and has a longer tail,) I find the valentine shaped breast markings of the juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk (photo 9) quite distinctive from the juvenile Cooper's vertical breast markings. (photo 10)

So, even if one is in serious default on a loan or mortgage payment, a good way to get away from such default problems and concerns, at least for a short while, can be going out and searching for the local "default hawks," whether they are Red-tailed up north or Red-shouldered in Florida. And I can assure you, the "default hawks," in either area, will not care one whit about any human default problems, whether they be loan, mortgage payment, or computer related.

For a definition of "default," see
www.google.com/search?q=definition+of+default .
For more on "default," see:



Red-shouldered Hawk in Florida (Photo 1)



Red-shouldered Hawk from north and south (Photo 3)



Red-shouldered Hawks in nuptial flight (Photo 4)



Red-shouldered Hawk with snake (Photo 5)



Red-tailed Hawk (Photo 6)



Red-tailed Hawk, juvenile (Photo 7)



***Western subspecies Red-tailed Hawk, rufous
form
(Photo 8, CORRECTED)***



Red-shouldered Hawk, juvenile (Photo 9)



Cooper's Hawk (Photo 10)

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