

FERRUGINOUS HAWK

(BUTEO REGALIS)

Navajo/Federal Statuses: NESL G3 / MBTA; not listed under the ESA.

Distribution: Breeding range extends from ND and northern TX, west to WA and NV, including northern NM and AZ, and into southern Canada. Winter range extends from CO and southern NE south into Mexico and west to northern CA; Navajo Nation is used by Ferruginous Hawks year-round; most (>90%) breed and winter in northwestern NM, but also occur in Chinle Valley, and Dilkon area.

Habitat: Ferruginous Hawks nest in badlands, flat or rolling desert grasslands, and desertscrub. Most nests on Navajo Nation are on clay or rock pinnacles, small buttes, or short cliffs (< 30 m height); fewer are placed in top of juniper trees or on the ground, and there is one record of a nest on the crossarm of a transmission-line tower. Habitat surrounding nest site must support populations of their preferred prey items of cottontail and jackrabbits, prairie dogs, ground squirrels and gophers.

Similar Species: Other *Buteo* hawks and Northern Harrier: adult Ferruginous Hawk has mostly white underparts and primaries, rufous legs feathered to feet (which form a 'V' in flight when viewed from below), and unbanded white or pale-rufous tail; immatures distinguished by whitish breast, whitish fully-feathered legs, light banding in the tail, little white on back.

Phenology:

- e.MAR-l.MAR: courtship, nest building
- m.MAR-m.MAY: egg-laying and incubation (33 days)
- e.MAY-l.JUN: nestling period (38-50 days)
- m.JUN-m.JUL: fledging of young (peak in l.JUN)
- m.JUL-m.SEP: independence of young, dispersal from natal area
- e.SEP-l.NOV: migration of adults from breeding area

Survey Method: ≥1 pedestrian survey with high-power optics for nest sites and/or breeding adults from 1 MAR-15 JUN, avoiding disturbance to nesting adults until nestlings are ≥20 days old (see 'Avoidance'). Unoccupied Ferruginous Hawk nests may be confused with those of other species, but are most often positioned on/near top of nest substrate.

Avoidance: No disturbance within 0.8 km (½ mi) of occupied nest during 1 MAR-31 JUL for Brief activity; 1.0 km (⅝ mi) for Light activity; 1.2 km (¾ mi) for Heavy activity; and 1.6 km (1 mi) for Loud activity; No daily-use permanent structure any time of year within 1.6 km (1 mi), and no infrequent-use permanent structures within 1.0 km (5/8 mi), of nesting territory. Nests without eggs by May 1st of any year are considered 'inactive' for that breeding season. Activity may commence 30 days post-fledging provided accurate age determination of young. Ferruginous Hawks are especially prone to desert nests if disturbed during incubation. Consult "Ferruginous Hawk Management Guidelines for Nest Protection."

References:

- Bechard, M.J. and J.K. Schmutz. 1995. Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*). In *The Birds of North America*, No.172 (A.Poole and F.Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- N.N. Dept.of Fish & Wildlife. 2005. [Ferruginous Hawk Management Guidelines for Nest Protection](#). Unpub.
- Ramakka, J.M. and R.T. Woyewodzic. 1993. Nesting ecology of Ferruginous Hawk in northwestern New Mexico. *J.Raptor Res.* 27:97-101.