Howdy TWA Friends!

Nancy Nine-band here and boy do I have a story for you! Last Thursday Grant the Gopher and I were enjoying some gardening in my front lawn when all of the sudden my cell phone rang. When I looked at the phone number calling, it didn’t have any caller ID so I was a little suspicious. After some reluctance, I answered with a bright “Hello, this is Nancy!”

“Hello, Nancy, this is the Governor of Texas, and I am in need of your help,” the voice on the other end of the phone said. My jaw dropped to the ground in shock. Why would the governor of Texas be calling me and what in the world can I help him with? “Hi Governor. It’s a pleasure to meet you and I would be delighted to help you with anything you need,” I said with a little giggle.

“Great! I need you to come to the state capitol in Austin, can you make it this afternoon?” he asked. “It’s urgent!”

“After I hung up the phone, Grant was looking at me like I was crazy. I told him that he better pack his bags, we are headed to the big city. After running around like crazy trying to figure out what we should bring, we finally hit the road.

Once we were on the highway, Grant and I started playing Eye-Spy. We spotted mesquite trees, white-tailed deer, vultures, a tortoise, and we even saw a Red-Tailed Hawk swoop in front of us on the highway looking for lunch.

By the time we got there, the Governor burst out of the front doors of the capitol and ran to our car. He shook our hands like we were old friends and assured us our car would be right where we left it and to follow him into his office. Once we were in his office, he sat us down and began.

“At first I was so relieved you were able to make it down to the capitol,” he said.

“It’s our pleasure, sir! Now, what seems to be the problem?” I asked.

“There is a large bird that made its nest in the garden of the capitol. Every time I go outside to get some air, the bird swoops down a little too close for comfort and I have to run back inside. Can you help me identify the bird and ask if she would mind not swooping every time I want to go on a walk?” the Governor said.

Now this was something I could handle. After he showed me the way to the garden, it didn’t take me long to spot the nest the Governor was talking about. It was on the tippy top of a window seal. The nest had to be at least 6 feet high and 3 feet across. That’s taller than three of me! But where was the bird?

“It didn’t take long until I heard a WOOSH to the left of me and another WOOSH to the right of me. I whirled around and saw two Red-Tailed Hawks about to make a second decent.

“STOP!” I exclaimed. “I’m not going to try and hurt you, I am your friend.”

They both slowed down just a hair and came gliding towards me.

“Hello, friend, who might you be?” the smaller of the two hawks asked.

“I’m Nancy Nine-band and I’m here to ask you a little favor. You see, that man that frequently comes into the garden doesn’t appreciate being swooped at. He runs the State of Texas and comes in this garden to relax and get away from his normal routine.”

“We are so sorry, Nancy! We had no idea he wasn’t going to hurt our nest,” the larger of the two birds said. “My mate and I have been a pair for four years now and our nest was destroyed last year. This year we were sometimes we can be a little over protective of our nest, especially because of our hatching chicks.”

“That’s quite alright,” I answered politely. “I think this is all a big misunderstanding, and we don’t blame you for being protective of your young. Do you promise to not swoop on the Governor?”

The two hawks shook their heads and said they would never bother the Governor again. Mission accomplished!  

Attention Teachers:
To receive a free one-year subscription, go to: http://www.texas-wildlife.org/program-areas/subscribe-to-critter-connections.
Last year, we provided programming for over 223,300 youth across the state through Distance Learning, Discovery Trunks, Wildlife by Design, Learning Across New Dimensions in Science (L.A.N.D.S.), and Texas Brigades. Contact us to find out how we may help you incorporate wildlife and natural resources into your classroom!

Most programs are free for teachers.

For information on our educational programs, please contact us at 800-TEX-WILD (800-839-9453).

Joining TWA is optional. Each membership helps support TWA programs but it is not required to participate in our programs.

Join us at www.texas-wildlife.org

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All members receive a one year subscription to our monthly magazine, Texas Wildlife.

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**Red-tailed Hawk Hidden Message**

Use the key below to learn another name the Red-tailed Hawk has been called.

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Creating the word **CHICKEN**

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Answer Key:

Create the word **CHICKEN**

Answer Key:
Red-tailed Hawk Word Find

Created by the www.TheRaptorCenter.org

Directions: Find and circle the words.

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Words to Find

- BIRDS
- OPEN FIELDS
- BROAD WINGS
- ROUNDED WINGS
- BUTEO JAMAICENSIS
- SHORT TAILS
- FEATHERS
- TELEPHONE POLES
- MAMMALS
- WOODLOTS
- MICE

Hovering Hawk Craft

Adapted from Ann Treacy's Doodles and Jots.com

Photos by Meredith Balzen

Materials that you will need:
- Construction paper cut to 8 1/2 by 11
- White or yellow pastel colors
- Scissors
- Double-sided tape
- 24 inch lengths of white thread

Directions:
2. Then add some white or yellow coloring to the breast area with pastel colors and blend.
3. Next cut out the hawk shape and fold along dotted lines.
4. Now place a piece of double-sided tape inside.
5. Tie thread in a loop and sandwich between the double-sided tape and close.
6. Tape them in pairs above all the beds your home and then sleep tight!
One of the reasons why the Red-tailed Hawk is so common is because of its excellent vision. They may see colors like most humans can as well as those beyond what humans can detect.

Have you ever heard the saying "eyes like a hawk?" Well, if you have, this is not just a fable. Red-tailed Hawks, like all raptors, have excellent vision. They may see colors like most humans can as well as those in the ultraviolet range. That means hawks can see things that a normal human can't!

One of the reasons why the Red-tailed Hawk is so common is because of its ability to adapt to different environments. They can occupy just about every type of open habitat on the North American continent. From the desert of west Texas, to the grasslands of north Texas and brush country in the south, the Red-tailed Hawk can be found everywhere.

Remember how vultures flew large, lazy circles looking for animals that were already dead? Red-tailed hawks do that too, at least the flying in circles part, but they don't fly to search for prey. Hawks will normally sit on a perch such as a tall tree or electricity pole and search for a meal in an open field. Also unlike vultures, hawks hunt for a meal that is still alive.

When a Red-tailed Hawk finds its next meal scurrying across the field, the hawk will attack in a slow, controlled dive with their legs outstretched. The bulk of a hawk's diet normally consists of mammals such as mice, jackrabbits and squirrels and sometimes even other birds.

The Red-tailed Hawk is one bird that mates for life. Courting Red-tailed Hawks display a daring air show of flight in which they soar in wide circles at a great height. The male dives steeply, then shoots up again at an angle nearly as steep. Sometimes, pairs will clasp talons and plummet in spirals towards the earth before letting go.

Both the male and female hawks are responsible for building the nest. Because pairs are normally together for years, they only build a nest once and refurbish it for years. Nests may be up to 6.5 feet high and 3 feet across and are built with tall piles of dry sticks on the outside. On the inside, it is lined with bark strips, fresh foliage and dry vegetation. An entire brand-new nest can take anywhere from 4-7 days to construct. Red-tailed Hawks normally build their nests in the crowns of tall trees where they can see for miles. Sometimes hawks nest on a cliff ledge or on artificial structures such as window ledges and billboard platforms.

Red-tailed Hawks normally have one brood every season. When the nest is complete, the female hawk may lay from 1 to 5
white speckled eggs. The incubation period for the eggs lasts 28 to 35 days, and when it comes time to hatch, the chicks are tiny, helpless babies that only weigh about 2 ounces but fledge quickly. They will remain with the parents for another 30 to 70 days.

Juvenile Red-tailed Hawks do not have red tails, no matter where they live. In fact, youngsters are lighter in color but their feathers gradually change color as they grow older.

One of the largest birds in the sky, the Red-tailed Hawk will defend its nest from predators with its sharp talons. Chasing off other hawks, eagles and owls is all in a day’s work. That is why sometimes humans and other animals experience hawks swooping or chasing them away from their nest or territory.

Hollywood has seemed to take a liking to the Red-tailed Hawk. Whenever you hear the sound of an eagle or hawk on a TV or movie screen, the thrilling raspy scream is almost always a hawk.

Next time you’re on a road trip, keep your hawk eyes on tall trees or a passing telephone pole. You might just catch a glimpse of a Red-tailed Hawk.

Sources:
Did you know...

...that the Red-tailed Hawks are sometimes referred to as "2x4's," because they stand on two feet and have a four foot wing span!

...that immature (young) Red-tailed Hawks resemble the adults, except their tails are brown with dark bars. They get their red tails during their second year.

...that in the movies, when you see a bald eagle, you’ll usually hear the powerful call of the Red-tailed Hawk. People think it sounds more majestic than the eagle's call.

...that baby Red-tailed Hawks are covered with white, downy feathers. The hawk parents feed their young until the young birds can leave the nest, usually when they’re about six weeks old.

Color Me

Red-tailed Hawk
(*Buteo jamaicensis*)

- Powerful wings with dark brown to gray-brown feathers with lighter V-shaped markings
- Large body
- Square-shaped tail
- Yellow feet with dark, sharp talons for catching prey
- White chest
- Keen eyesight to spot prey
- Sharp, curved, dark-colored bill to tear apart prey

Red-brown (rufous) tail feathers edged in white

Photo by Wyman Meinzer

Image adapted from ZoomSchool.com
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