

# Gillespie Creek Journal

## Spiral Glide

Watching a hawk soar in a thermal I became  
him-  
Not flapping my wings just leaning, turning,  
riding.  
Up and up, above, over, hover.  
A dot lost in the midday haze.

Mary Lee Hahn



As we enter into the coldest weeks of winter Raptors have become more visible. Pictured above so beautifully by my photographer friend Buddy Walker, this **Red-tailed Hawk** teaches us much about the success of her species. The Red Tail is the most common Hawk and lives throughout all of our continent. At this time of the year Red-tails do tend to leave higher altitudes and along with Snow-birds like me find territories further south.

Buddy has photographed this same female Red-tail for several years. He affectionately has named her **Lady H**. In return his lady has shown her trust by landing within eight feet of him to peacefully enjoy a morning in the sun. Eventually she went to work and scored the rabbit prey pictured above.

Red-tailed Hawks are placed in the "Buteo" category of Raptor. Their distinguishing feature is broad wings which they skillfully use to soar. Scientists along with Buddy will attest that Red-tails can identify people as well as voices. Perhaps you have experienced their "Keer-r-r" call. I have on many hot summer afternoons when settling down in my hammock for a nap. Apparently my perch was too close to our resident Red-tails's nest. May and June are nesting months. Young are fledged 42-46 days after hatching. In Minnesota they are ready to forage on their own during the hottest days of summer. A clutch of Red-tailed Hawks can contain as many as 5 eggs. (28-35 days of incubation is needed.). What is a family of Red-tails called? A Kettle. It has been reported that Red-tails will soar together in a Kettle before migrating. I tallied Red-tails one year as Ray drove us the 1800 miles from Minnesota to Arizona. Over 100 boldly were perched on fence posts, in tall trees and on utility poles.

Shamans declare," When you are lucky enough to see a Red-tail Hawk, you should clear your mind. The creator is giving you a message that a miracle is on its way."



Surprise Christmas Day  
Bird Sighting

If you haven't read Helen Mcdonald's prize winning memoir **H is for Hawk** I highly recommend it. Children's best Raptor read is **My Side of the Mountain** by Jean Craighead George.