

## **Raptors and Nightjars**

### **What is this eGuide about? What kind of information is included?**

When I first started birding, raptors were almost impossible for me to identify. This was true for a long time - even though almost all are big birds and when they are perched or roosting, they sit still for long periods of time so you can get a good look at them and page through your field guide. There is just so much similarity. And then there are so many subspecies and morphs..... And don't forget the juveniles whose plumage can just be a mess. This can be frustrating. Mindboggling.

I begin this eGuide by helping you sort out large, dark/black soaring birds. I explain the small differences in appearance, but emphasize behavior. Movement. And I include lots of photos – and don't forget to look at photos in your own field guide.

Following this discussion, I talk about individual hawks and falcons, and then owls. And the format is the same as in the eGuide Common Songbirds and Raptors in your Neighborhood, Yard, and Favorite Park. At the beginning of the discussion for each bird, I list their physical characteristics. These are in boxes with photos of the bird. This is followed by paragraphs describing behavior and also boxes of additional information. An example of these boxes would be that during nesting season, the male Turkey Vulture develops a brood patch. There is a box explaining brood patches and how they are used.

What are nightjars? And why did I include them in this eGuide? Nightjars are birds like the whip-poor-will. I included two of these birds in this book – Eastern Whip-poor-will and Common Nighthawk - which is not a hawk at all! – because like owls, they are nocturnal. If you decide to go out looking for owls at dusk or dawn, you can look for nightjars at the same time. Owls and nightjars just seem to go together!

This eGuide is written in a conversational style. My friends who have read it told me it seemed like I was right there with them – talking. Explaining. This is exactly the tone I want. This is not an academic or scholarly work, but a guide to teach you to ID the raptor you are seeing – or at least greatly narrow your choices. And I wanted to do it lightheartedly and with some humor. Besides helping you untangle the complicated world of raptors, I want to encourage you to get out and experience birds. To observe all this for yourself. To form your own opinions. So much about birds is still not known – particularly when it comes to behavior. What they do and especially why. How they communicate. Experience the world of raptors and your mind will also soar.