

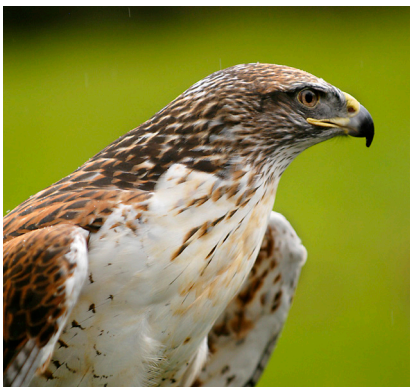


# FERRUGINOUS HAWK

*Buteo regalis*



**WASHINGTON STATE** is home to the largest soaring hawk in North America, recognized by its beautiful white and rusty-colored plumage. Nests of this regal species are found in grasslands and sagebrush habitats in eastern Washington, mainly in Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla counties. Only about 40 pairs of this species remain in Washington, which was uplisted from Threatened to Endangered in 2021. This species is at risk mainly due to habitat loss and human disturbance from land conversion energy development, and wildfires.



## HAWKS NEED YOUR HELP

Ferruginous hawks need your help. To help this regal hunter of the state's driest regions, protect their habitat and prey resources.

- **Protect and restore native grasslands and shrublands and the trees that raptors rely on for nesting:**
  - Retain isolated stands of junipers or black locusts and plant trees to replace dying ones.
  - Protect native grasslands from wildfires by maintaining firebreaks and support restoration of grassland shrub steppe habitats. Through the [State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement \(SAFE\)](#) initiative, landowners can enroll farmland in the Conservation Reserve Program to receive payments for providing wildlife habitat – contact your local Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife office to learn more.
  - [Volunteer](#) for shrub steppe restoration projects – check with local land trusts, Conservation Districts or conservation organizations for opportunities.
- **Protect prey populations:**
  - Avoid using pesticides and tilling soils to prevent the elimination of insect and rodent populations.
  - Avoid using rodenticides and shooting to control mammals to prevent secondary poisoning of hawks.
  - Support the Living Northwest Program to directly promote cooperative conservation of the ferruginous hawk ([www.zoo.org/raptors](http://www.zoo.org/raptors)).



Photo courtesy of Steve Desimone



Photo courtesy of Jim Watson



Photo courtesy of Jim Watson



Photo courtesy of Jim Watson



Photo courtesy of Jesse Watson

## ECOSYSTEM CONNECTIONS

Ferruginous hawks are migratory; our research shows that they arrive in Washington in late February, when they begin their 5- to 6-month nesting season. They return to their nests from previous years, built on cliffs, rock outcrops, isolated trees and artificial structures including power poles. Abundance and proximity of prey to nests is critical for ferruginous hawks to nest successfully. Ground squirrels and jackrabbits were historically important prey, but the decline of these animals has resulted in a diet shift to snakes, insects and pocket gophers. This non-traditional prey is inferior for sustaining reproduction and nesting populations of ferruginous hawk. Nesting hawks typically migrate to non-breeding ranges along the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains from southern Alberta to Texas and spent the winter in central and southern California before they return to eastern Washington again in late February.



**In Washington state, Ferruginous hawks prefer to prey on larger species, such as jackrabbits and ground squirrels:**

**Following declines of jackrabbits and ground squirrels, ferruginous hawks now prey on smaller species – such as snakes, grasshoppers and pocket gophers – and have to catch more of them. Hawks may be unable to find enough prey to feed their chicks during their spring nesting season, reducing chick survival.**

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## RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) monitors the state’s ferruginous hawk population and works with landowners on conservation efforts. WDFW has worked cooperatively with Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) through the Living Northwest Program since 1999 to investigate ferruginous hawk ecology through research including telemetry studies of long-range movements and behavioral studies of wind-power impacts and home range ecology.

For further information, please see [www.zoo.org/raptors](http://www.zoo.org/raptors)



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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON SHRUB STEPPE HABITATS

Shrub Steppe Curriculum, <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/sagebrush-ecosystem-curriculum>  
WDFW Shrub Steppe Resources, <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/ecosystems/shrubsteppe#resources>  
Shrub Steppe Food Web Poster, <https://www.fws.gov/media/sagebrush-education-posters>  
Shrub Steppe Healthy Ecosystem Poster, [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/SGIposter\\_32x21\\_0725.pdf](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/SGIposter_32x21_0725.pdf)