

Common Name/Scientific name: Collared Sparrowhawk / *Accipiter cirrocephalus*

Collared Sparrowhawks are sometimes called Chickenhawks.

The Collared Sparrowhawk specialises in hunting small birds. Unlike the closely related Brown Goshawk, the long, slender legs of the sparrowhawk restrict the size of the prey that it can take. A Crested Pigeon and a Spotted Bowerbird are the largest birds that sparrowhawks have been recorded taking. They also sometimes catch insects, lizards and small mammals to eat. Sparrowhawks rely on stealth and surprise to catch their prey, hunting in flight or bursting from a concealed perch among foliage.



Description: The Collared Sparrowhawk is a medium-sized, finely built raptor (bird of prey) with wide staring bright yellow eyes. The upperparts and side of the head are slate- grey, with a complete chestnut half-collar. The underparts are finely barred pale rufous on white and the rounded wings are rather short. The bill is black, with a pale yellow cere (fleshy bill base). The Collared Sparrowhawk has long fine yellow legs and very long toes, especially the middle toe. The tail is long and generally squared at the tip. The sexes are similar in appearance but males are smaller than females.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: Collared Sparrowhawks mainly eat small birds caught in flight. They hunt during the day, and also at dawn and dusk to catch birds at their roost sites. Their very long middle toe is used to clutch their prey, before it is killed, plucked and eaten.

Breeding and Nesting: The Collared Sparrowhawk builds a rather flat nest of twigs and sticks in the fork of a tree, usually high among the foliage. The nest is lined with fresh leaves. Mainly the female incubates, with the male helping at times, though he provides her with food. The female broods the young for the first week or so and then shelters them in very hot or cold weather. The young are fed with small pieces of food, bill to bill. Sparrowhawks are very calm at their nest, unlike Brown Goshawks which are very aggressive.

Similar Species in the gardens: The Collared Sparrowhawk is similar in appearance to the related Brown Goshawk, *A. fasciatus*, which has a rounded tail rather than the squared tail of the Collared Sparrowhawk. The Brown Goshawk also has a heavy brow, giving it a fierce look, and thicker legs and toes. Male Brown Goshawks (35-38cm) are much the same size as female Collared Sparrowhawks but female Brown Goshawks are considerably larger (40-55cm). See more information on the Brown Goshawk on the Birds Regularly Seen page.