

# THIS WEEK ON THE LLANO ESTACADO

January 4-8, 2010



In the winter two species of hawks come to town. Cooper's Hawks, like this one, and Sharp-shinned Hawks, which look very similar are forest birds who find the urban forest a rich hunting ground.

Both species are normally bird hunters but the Cooper's will take a tree squirrel, as did this one. Very few

predators hunt squirrels in Midland's urban forest.

On January 2nd, the Midland Naturalists did their annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. 107 species were seen from sunup to sundown, within a circle only 15 miles across. 25 people surveyed specific areas and then gathered at a local restaurant to total the numbers from 7 different "parties" or small groups of people.

This count has been done since 1947. In the early days only 60 to 70 species were found, but with the increased amount of urban forest and ponds in parks and golf courses, the average is now around 110 species every year.

**TEACHER AND STUDENT CHALLENGE;** If you find a "pile of feathers" on the ground, you have found where one of these hawks has eaten a meal. They pluck their prey! Walk the school grounds, and check underneath every tree at least once a week until April, and report to [bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org](mailto:bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org) if you find any!