

Harris's Hawk
10 Sep 1989
s. of Blainstow, Benton Co., IA
J. Fuller, Kent
IBL 60:13, 61:85, P-0292

Record Number: 89-28
Classification: A-E

DOCUMENTATIONS

Jim Fuller
Thomas H. Kent

PHOTOGRAPHS

T. H. Kent, P-0292

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:13
Records Committee: IBL 61:85

VOTE: 7 A-E

A-E: Identification is fine; origin is questionable. As stated in HAWKS by Clark and Wheeler about this species, "Captive-bred Harris' Hawks are popular in falconry, and escapees can be expected almost anywhere in our area (U.S.)."

A-E: No question on the identification of this bird. Was it wild? According to one Am Birds Field Reports Editor (which I read recently but couldn't find again) this species is not a known vagrant. It is also frequently kept in captivity. While I have some problems with the assumption that every vagrant Buteo is an escapee, we should probably take the conservative view with this one. I would favor keeping the file open, however, pending new or unrepresented information on vagrancy by this species.

A-E: This bird is obviously an adult Harris' Hawk. The frayed tail and the shaggy unkept (sic) appearance in the photo suggest an escapee. The hawk would be way out of range and is not known to be a wander (sic) to my knowledge.

A-E: I am concerned as to the origin of this bird. As described I have no doubt that what was seen was a Harris' Hawk. Many of these birds are kept in captivity by falconers and raptor breeders. If the origin of this bird could be proven not to have come from captivity I would change my vote accordingly.

A-E: Good descriptions of this beautiful hawk. Since Harris' Hawks are used by falconers, this bird may likely be an escaped bird. It's far from its normal range.

A-E: Clearly a Harris Hawk, and also clearly an adult. While an immature might be more likely as a late summer or fall vagrant, this species has nested as close as Kansas in the 1960's. I believe it is possible this bird was wild but am voting A-E for 2 reasons: date of observation for an adult raises significant doubt, and this species is known to be kept by falconers. I would immediately change vote if others were seen north of usual range in 1989, which was extremely dry in Kansas and other parts of north edge of normal range, conditions which might lead to wider post breeding dispersal of both adults and young birds (if any of the latter were hatched!).

REVIEW OF PHOTOS (at meeting of 29 July 1990): Several members felt that photos showed bird with worn plumage, perhaps indicating captivity. No action taken.



Harris' Hawk P-0292
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What species? HARRIS' HAWK How many? 1Location? 2 1/2 MILES SOUTH OF BLAIRSTOWN (BENTON CO) ALONG U-56Type of habitat? FEEDLOT AND OPEN GRAZING LAND (HILLY)When? date(s): 10 SEPT. 6:45 AM 7:30 AM
14 SEPT. time: 11:55 AM to 12:21 PMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER, 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL, RR#6, IOWA CITY, IA, 52202

others with you: _____

others before or after you: FOUND BY KEITH CARRIS
TOM KENT + CARL BENDORF

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

THE BIRD WAS SEEN AT A GREAT DISTANCE IN POOR LIGHT ON 10 SEPT. IMPRESSIONS FROM THAT SIGHTING WERE OF A LARGE DARK BUTEO. FIELD MARKS SEEN WERE WHITE RUMP, WIDE BLACK TAIL BAND AND NARROW WHITE TAIL TIP. UNDERTAIL & VENT WERE WHITE, AND A LIGHT CERE WAS NOTED.

SECOND SIGHTING WAS MUCH CLOSER IN GOOD LIGHT, AND BIRD SEEN IN FLIGHT FOR A SHORT TIME. ALL FIELD MARKS FROM FIRST SIGHTING WERE CONFIRMED, IN ADDITION, ON THE PERCHED BIRD, BRIGHT CHESTNUT SHOULDER PATCHES SEEN, AND CHESTNUT AROUND UPPER LEGS. THERE WAS A SHARP DEMARCATION BETWEEN WHITE OF UNDERTAIL AND DARK OF STOMACH DIRECTLY BEHIND THE LEGS. EYE WAS DARK. LEGS WERE LIGHT (YELLOWISH) AND CERE WAS DEFINITELY YELLOW. IN FLIGHT, THERE WERE LARGE CHESTNUT PATCHES (UNDERWING COVERTS) ON UNDERWING. ALSO LESS PROMINENT CHESTNUT PATCHES ON UPPERWING. THE REST OF WINGS, HEAD, BACK, & BREAST WAS A DARK BLACK-BROWN COLOR.

THE HAWK NEVER WAS SEEN TO SOAR, BUT FLEW FROM ONE FENCEPOST TO ANOTHER. IT HELD ITS RIGHT FOOT UP (AS IF INTAKED) ON 10 SEPT SEEN ABOUT ~~5~~ 5 FENCEPOSTS FROM A RED-TAILED HAWK AT ONE TIME - APPEARED TO BE ABOUT THE SAME SIZE.

Similar species and how eliminated: WHITE TAILED HAWK HAS SIMILAR SHOULDER PATCH BUT BREAST IS LIGHT. DARK PHASE SWAINSON'S OR RED TAIL DO NOT HAVE WHITE UNDERTAIL OR THIS TAIL PATTERN

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

10 SEPT - EARLY MORNING CLEAR - LOOKING EAST INTO SUN - 700 YARDS
TSN-4 KOWA SCOPE14 SEPT - 300-⁴⁰⁰ YARDS - MIDDAY - CLEAR - TSN 4 KOWA SCOPE

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

SEEN IN TEXAS AND ARIZONAReferences and persons consulted before writing description: NATL GEOGRAPHICHow long before field notes made? IMMEDIATE this form completed? 8 HOURS (AFTER 14 SEPT)

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Harris' Hawk (1), 10 September 1989, 2.5 miles south of
Blairstown, Benton Co., Iowa.

Observer: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

Other observers: Keith Carris (before), Jim Fuller, Carl Bendorf,
Ken Lowder (with on first sighting)

Time: 7:15-7:20 a.m.; 12:45-1:15 p.m.

Habitat: hilly farm land at large cattle feeding area.

Description: When Carl and I arrived about 7:15, Jim Fuller had the bird in his scope. It was sitting in a large dead tree at the top of the hill with the sun rising behind it. We could see the white base to tail, white vent, yellow bill, and overall black appearance. While we were deciding how to approach the bird and how to get permission to enter the land, the bird flew and returned to the tree a least two times. Ken Lowder arrived in time to see the bird, but Pete Wickham and John Daniels came after we last saw it. We spent the morning walking the area and driving the surrounding roads, but could not relocate the bird. I returned alone after taking Carl back to Amana, and the bird was in the same tree. I dictated the following notes after returning to the car.

"I gradually moved up on the bird along the fence line across the muddy field and was 40 paces from the bird when it flew. I took numerous pictures along the way. The bird is a medium-sized buteo, perhaps slightly smaller than a red-tail or about the same size. It has a large wide bill that is dark at the tip and yellow proximally, with yellow appearing to extend on to the facial skin [the yellow is quite evident at a great distance]. The head is dark gray-black and the eye appears dark. The front of the bird is dark charcoal, almost black. The vent is pure white. The upper base and tip of the tail are also white. The white areas are more prominent in flight. The tip of the tail is distinct in flight, but appears somewhat frayed in the sitting bird when it fans the tail. The rest of tail is dark. The legs appear yellow. I did not look carefully for a band, but I did not see one. The shoulder area in the sitting bird is rufous-brown; the rest of the wing is nearly black. In flight the rufous area is confined to the upper wing coverts from the proximal portion of the wing out to the wrist. The bird flies with shallow wing beats with occasional glides." I did not note rufous on the underparts; perhaps the photos will show the leggings. In flight I did not see the under wing well.

Song: not heard

Behavior: sitting in tree, flying away.

Conditions: 40 yards (paced); clear; I used a questar until the bird filled one-third of the field, then 10x binocular; also 750 mm celestron lens on camera.

Similar species: I do not know of any similar species.

Agreement: yes

Previous experience: have seen many in Texas.

References/time used: look at NGS guide between sightings.

Time of notes/typed: dictated 10 minutes after last
sighting/typed next morning.