

Northern Goshawk
20 May 1999
Stephens State Forest, Lucas Co., IA
*Ann Johnson
IBL 69:93, 70:145

Record Number: 99-09
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk 50211 [9/17/99]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:93
Records Committee: IBL 70:145

VOTE: 3 A-D, 4 NA

A-D, In areas of Minnesota where this species is migratory, the late spring date is 16 May. While Stephens SF is a ways from Minnesota, it does illustrate that this species can be a late migrant. The brief period of observation leaves much to be desired, but the description of the tail and underparts seems to eliminate other candidates. I don't think I'll buy the "potential breeding" theory.

NA, Very possibly was a Goshawk, but views brief and at a distance and sketchy description make it difficult to accept a sighting which would be the latest by nearly a month.

A-D, I came to the same conclusion under similar circumstances in early May several years ago. The gray of the Goshawk's underparts is very different from the rufous of sharpies or Cooper's.

NA, There are a few May records from Missouri and Illinois, most in invasion years. This bird would be a month later than the latest for Iowa. Probably should stick with the principle that birds not well seen should not be used for early and late dates. Close.

NA, No discussion of possibility of large (female) Cooper's Hawk, far more likely at this date and location.

NA, Extremely difficult call, however, 'cursory looks', 'naked eye' at 100 yds for a bird 1 month late left me doubtful.

99-09

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Northern Goshawk

Location: Stephen's State Forest, Lucas County

Date: 20 May 1999 **Time:** 1:45 pm **Length of observation:** 1 minute

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211
Jim Bangma, 319 Lakewood Terrace, Newton, NJ 07860

Other observers: none

Background: As we were heading east to leave the Lucas Unit of Stephen's SF, Johnson noted an accipiter-type bird fly out of the pine grove at the top of the hill and disappear. When we got further on the road, the bird once again made a brief appearance as it flew away from us.

Viewing conditions (light, distance, and optics): Good light on a bird about 100 yards away. Most of the observation was naked eye but we both got binoculars on it to see the tail barring well.

Description of bird: When Johnson first saw the bird, the behavior/jizz made her mutter "accipiter" before it disappeared. When we came up the hill and around the corner we saw a gray hawk with broad, rounded wings. It took off quickly and allowed us only cursory looks at the underparts. Most of what we saw was gray. The tail was muted light gray/dark gray striped and the undertail coverts were bright white. What we could see of the belly was simply gray. The angle at which the bird flew allowed us no other field marks upon which to key.

Similar species/discussion: The powerful direct flight, the longish tail, and the rounded broad wings identified this bird as an accipiter. Bangma's first comment was that the width of the wings reminded him of Hook-billed Kites in So. Texas, a dramatic characteristic that allows experienced hawk watchers to identify Northern Goshawk from a distance - literally a stovepipe with broad wings. Buteos have a much shorter tail that gives them an entirely different look and feel. A gray adult male Northern Harrier would look white below and have longer wings proportionate to the body. Although we were unable to see the bird at an angle to see every characteristic of this species, other accipiters would have been rufous or brown from below.

Although this is certainly a late date for this species, Northern Goshawk has been seen in the winter in and near this location. In breeding areas it feeds on grouse. We speculated on the reintroduction of Ruffed Grouse in this area and what effect it might have on late migration and even potential breeding.

Previous experience: Both observers are familiar with accipiters and other hawk species.

References consulted:

____ 1987. Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 2nd Edition. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society.