

Harris's Hawk
CA 1895
Hillsboro, Van Buren Co., IA
Walter G. Savage
Anderson 1907, Bent 1937

Record Number: 81-AV
Classification: NA

PAINTING

Watercolor by William Savage, State Historical Society, Des Moines, 6053.43²⁹ [photo by T. H. Kent, 2000; not reviewed]

REFERENCES

Anderson 1907
DuMont 1933
Bent 1937

VOTE (1981): 1-IV, 5-V, 1-VI

V, No description for or against. Could have been confused with 'Harlan's'? Probably no chance of locating the painting. Savage seems to have been careful observer.

V, Is the painting still in existence? Many of Savage's paintings went into the capitol in Des Moines.

VI, no details.

IV, Easily identified bird. Savage considered reliable by his peers.

V, Based on resemblance between a painting of a specimen trapped by Savage's father and the description by Coues; no description of the bird or bird in the picture. No picture.

IV, Inclusion by DuMont carries weight, in my opinion. Also has nested in Kansas.



SHS#: 029

Species: a. American Kestrel, b. Red-tailed Hawk

Front: Sparrow Hawk, Black Warrior W. S.

Back: 196; 8.00

SHS log: 20 7/16 x 22 5/8

Diary: 10 Sep 1894 "paint on Black Hawk."; 12 Sep 1894 "paint some on said hawk"

Comment: Nice. An all-dark Red-tailed Hawk. The thin black and wider rufous tail bands and rufous chest fit with an adult rufous-morph Red-tail (see Clark and Wheeler. 1987. *Hawks*).
 Condition: a few specks on background. Is it likely that this is the bird Walter G. Savage referred to as a Harris Hawk captured in Van Buren County near Hillsboro when he wrote to Rudolph M. Anderson on February 25, 1904: "Nine years ago a trapper caught one in a steel trap and brought it to me. This is the only one I can positively identify in our locality. My father took this hawk and now has a fine painting from it, true to nature. It is identical with your description, and also Coues'. It is surely a Harris Hawk." (Anderson, R. M. 1907. *Birds of Iowa*). This is the only dark hawk mentioned by William Savage at this time. Coues' *Key to North American Birds*, 5th edition, 1903 does not include Harris's Hawk, but uses "Black Warrior" as a synonym for Harlan's Buzzard. We do not know which of Coues' books Walter Savage had access to, but he may have confuse Harlan's Hawk with Harris's Hawk. The various forms of Red-tailed Hawk were confusing at that time, and the status of Harlan's Hawk (now a subspecies of Red-tail) was debatable.

141. (335). *Parabuteo unicinctus harrisi* (Aud.). Harris Hawk.

Anderson 1907
p 246

This strikingly marked Hawk is an inhabitant of the southern border of the United States from Mississippi to Lower California, and south to Panama. Its admission to the Iowa list is based upon a single specimen captured in Van Buren county, near Hillsboro. Walter G. Savage writes concerning it, February 25, 1904: "Nine years ago a trapper caught one in a steel trap and brought it to me. This is the only one that I can positively identify in our locality. My father took this Hawk and now has a fine painting from it, true to nature. It is identical with your description, and also Coues'. It is surely a Harris Hawk."

Parabuteo unicinctus harrisi (Audubon). Harris's Hawk

DuMont 1934
p 52

Of accidental occurrence in Iowa. Anderson (1907) says of this species: "Its admission to the Iowa list is based upon a single specimen captured in Van Buren County, near Hillsboro. Walter G. Savage writes concerning it, February 25, 1904: 'Nine years ago a trapper caught one in a steel trap and brought it to me. This is the only one that I can positively identify in our locality. My father took this hawk and now has a fine painting from it, true to nature. It is identical with your description, and also Coues'. It is surely a Harris Hawk'."

Bent, A. C.: Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey (Part 1). Bull 167 US Nat Museum, Washington, 1937. p 147

Casual records.—The type specimen of *harrisi* was taken by Audubon between Bayou Sara, La., and Natchez, Miss. The species has been subsequently reported as occurring along the coast of Louisiana and on some of the larger islands, but additional specimens do not seem to have been taken.

A specimen was caught in a steel trap near Hillsboro, Van Buren County, Iowa, about 1895, and on December 24, 1917, one of a pair was shot by a farmer 4 miles southwest of Harrisburg, Ohio.