

Documentation Form  
Unusual Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Immature Golden Eagle

Location: YMCA Camp northwest of Boone IA

Habitat: Soaring above Des Moines River

Date: 1 January 1998

Time: 1145 Length of observation: 3 minutes

Name and Address: Kevin Healy 2427 Waterford Drive Ames IA 50010

Other Observers: None

Description of bird: A large black raptor with white flight feathers. The bird soared steadily with little or no rocking side to side. The wings were held nearly flat with only a slight dihedral. The head was dark, the beak light colored. Eyes and cere were not observed. The breast, belly and underwing coverts were uniformly dark. Primary and secondary flight feathers were white to silver-gray. The tail was dirty white with a thin, dark terminal band. The ratio of head length to tail length was about 1:2.

Similar species and how eliminated: **Turkey Vulture**. Similar in size, but flight different (i.e., this bird did not rock back and forth despite fairly stiff winds during time of observation). Also, wings were held flatter than what I expect for a Turkey Vulture.

**Harlan's Hawk**: Breast and belly solid in color, no barring on tail, wing shape unlike that of Red-tailed Hawk. Size difference.

**Dark phase Rough-legged Hawk**: No speckling on breast or belly, tail longer with thinner terminal band. Size difference.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions (light, distance, optics): Clear, sunny. Winds aloft est. 20 mph. Viewed through Leica Ultra 42, 10x.

Previous experience with this species and similar ones: I have seen lots of Turkey Vultures, a few of the dark hawks mentioned in the differential and two Golden Eagles.

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Survey Field Guide. Wheeler and Clark Photographic Guide to N. American Raptors. Dunne et. al. Hawks in Flight. I talked with Mark Widrlechner about the identification.

How long before field notes made? 6 hours

This form completed? Three days.

Kevin Healy