

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos) How many? 1Location? Argyle, Iowa, s.w. Lee CountyType of habitat? Open country, 2 miles from Des Moines RiverWhen? date(s): Ap. 6, 1985 time: 11:15AM to 11:20 AMWho? your name and address: Robert I. Cecil, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632others with you: Noothers before or after you: No

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.

While driving towards Argyle from Shimek Forest, I observed a very large Buteo-shaped raptor soaring overhead. I put my binoculars on it and observed a large raptor that was uniformly dark/black except for two highly conspicuous field marks. One was the white patch at the base of the primaries of each wing. This patch was not something one had to look at carefully to see, it was the most obvious field mark about the bird--it was the first thing I noticed. The bird turned and I was also able to see this on the top surface of the wing. The second field mark, and also a conspicuous one, was the broad dark terminal band on an otherwise white (or very light) tail. Otherwise, this bird was uniformly dark/black, including undersides, head, and wings to the tips of the primaries.

Another noticeable feature of the bird was the head. The head seemed disproportionately small --it seemed dwarfed by the body. A Bald Eagle's head is much larger in relation to its body.

The bird traveled in a S.W. to N.E. direction, and I followed it by auto or with binoculars for perhaps 3 miles. Interestingly, I never observed the bird beat a wing, although it appeared to gain at least 1000 feet in altitude. I finally lost it as a speck in the distance.

No other sounds or features were observed.

Similar species and how eliminated: Imm. Bald Eagles splotchy white underneath--have seen this many times. Tail pattern similar to Rough-leg, but size, overall profile wrong, as was body coloration (although I've not seen dark phase Rough-leg.) Proportionately small head wrong for all Buteos.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? N.A.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Viewing conditions excellent. Sky clear with scattered high Cumulus clouds. Distance, 200 to 1000 yards or more (guess) Binoculars 10x40 Zeiss.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen immature Golden Eagles at Allamakee Co. Lots of experience with Bald Eagles, and I'm getting pretty good at Buteos.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson (1980), N.G.S. Field Guide during identification only. (I did not immediately know what this was)

How long before field notes made? 15 minutes this form completed? 20 hours

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