

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What Species? Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos) How many? 1 imm.

Location? Forney Lake, Fremont Co., Iowa

Type of Habitat? Cattail marsh <sup>next</sup> ~~next~~ to lake. Sat on muskrat house

When? date(s)? Mar. 28, 1986 time: 10:10 AM to 10:25 AM

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil  
327 S. 6th, Keokuk, IA 52632

others with you: Francis L. Moore  
Waterloo, IA

others 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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Francis announced that he had just seen a Golden Eagle fly up and land on the muskrat house. I put my scope on it and observed a very large raptor. Although at no time did I have a basis for size comparison, it appeared Eagle sized. Most immediately conspicuous about the bird were the golden hackles about the head and neck. In flight, these appeared light brown as compared to the remainder of the birds plumage. Also noticeable was the rusty-brownish of the back--I had not noticed this before in my limited experience with Golden Eagles. The bird's primaries appeared comparatively darker. The bird's tail was very rounded in flight when fanned. The tail was dirty white at the base with a dark terminal band. Indistinct whitish patches showed at the base of the wing primaries, but not as conspicuously as in other imm. Golden's I have seen. (I think this may have been older than a first year bird.)

Overall, the body was large and uniformly dark, including the undersides.

After a few minutes, the bird took off and flew in a generally NW direction until it was out of sight.

Similar species and how eliminated: Imm. Bald Eagle has splotchy undersides, dark(not golden) head. Too massive for melanistic buteos.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

If yes, explain: N.A.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Scope: 20x Nikon. Distance: minimum 400 yds. Viewing conditions good.

Previous experience with this and similar species: Have seen perhaps 4 imm. Golden Eagles at 3 locations in past 2 years.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? At the time.

How long before this form completed? 2 weeks.