

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Golden Eagle

Location: Along I29 in northern Harrison Co., IA

Habitat: Primarily agricultural land in Missouri River bottom

Date: 8 April 1991

Time: Approx. 12:00 to 12:05 pm

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: Beth Brown, Osceola

Description of bird: This large raptor was kettling with three Swainson's Hawks in an area along the interstate. We pulled onto the shoulder to observe the hawks and noticed that one bird was significantly larger than the others. It was all dark brown but had somewhat lighter, grayer flight feathers. It was soaring with a bit of a dihedral which gave it an initial appearance of a large Swainson's. The fingers of the outer primaries were widely spread in flight. The head and bill were definitely of raptor proportions and the head was feathered. The tail appeared long, particularly in relation to the head projection, and appeared all dark.

Similar species and how eliminated: Swainson's Hawk and other dark-morph buteos were eliminated by size and less contrast between flight feathers and underwing coverts. Turkey Vulture was eliminated by size, underwing contrast, feathered head, and flight style. Bald Eagle was eliminated by lack of any white visible from below and the short head/long tail profile.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): The sky was overcast. The bird was observed at various distances, the closest being probably 100 yards (distance and height combined). Observation was through 7x26 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen a number of Golden Eagles in the west over the years and have much recent experience with Bald Eagles of various ages.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Dunne's Hawks in Flight was consulted to confirm identification.

How long before field notes made? Upon return home that evening How long before this form completed? Six weeks