

Details of identification; Prairie Falcon  
Clay County  
Ap. 2, 1993

*Bob Cecil*

Lee Schoenewe and I were birding by car when I saw a medium sized raptor fly into a bare tree about 100' from the road. We stopped and observed an approximately crow-sized falcon facing us. From what we could see of the back was a sandy brown color. I also observed (and mentioned to Lee) the presence of a thin dark malar stripe dropping from the eye and flanking a white throat. Also apparent was a creamy white, unmarked breast and underparts. Based upon general size, the malar stripe, and the light brown back, we concluded it was a Prairie Falcon. I noted that in order to confirm the identification, we needed to look at the axillaries if the bird flew. A few moments later, it did, and we observed that they were quite dark. Also noted were the long, pointed wings consistent with a falcon.

I didn't, and still don't know quite what to make of the pale, unmarked undersides of the bird, which appears to be inconsistent with all photos or renderings I was able to find of the species. Later in the day, I asked Lee if he also felt the undersides were pale and unmarked, and he confirmed that that was his impression as well.