

Ferruginous Hawk
22 Mar 1995
Mark Twain NWR, Louisa Co., IA
*Jim Mattsson
IBL 65:72, 66:96

Record Number: 95-11
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

James P. Mattsson, Mark Twain NWR, 1704 N. 24th St., Quincy IL
62301

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:72

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, This documentation covers all bases -- plumage description, structural characteristics, and flight pattern.

A-D, The red shoulders seem diagnostic. The large size, long wings, long white tail, upper wing windows, and the dihedral wings are also very supportive.

A-D, This group has historically been conservative with records of this western buteo, but I see nothing in this excellent description to refute the ID.

A-D, The description is very detailed and recapitulates the order of observation. The observer was quite aware of the rarity of this bird and had experience with identification. Clark and Wheeler show more rufous on the rump than on the back. Rufous red-tails have more red on the underparts. The underwing pattern and the date argue strongly against Swainson's Hawk. The only worry that I have is that it is an odd red-tail.

NA, Due to variability in red-tail's color and size, I don't feel that species was safely eliminated.

RE-VOTE (by mail): 7 A-D

A-D, NA's rather vague doubts do not dissuade me.

A-D, I still think the red shoulders are diagnostic and safely eliminate Red-tailed Hawk.

A-D, Long wings, white tail, red shoulders, description of windows, dihedral -- if this was a variation of a Red-tail, Ferruginous should be given sub-species status. I find no reason to change my original vote.

A-D, Rusty wing coverts and tail coloration and pattern safely eliminates Red-tailed Hawk. This is probably one of the best descriptions the committee has had for Ferruginous Hawk for some time.

A-D, Report is convincing.

A-D, NA comment does not change my A-D vote.

Pete, et al.

my background:

- 1) Birding 25 years, NA, Mexico,
- Belize, Puerto Rico, Europe
- 2) Several Minnesota State records
including: 1st Ross Gull (1984)
1st Sage Thrasher (1985)
- 3) many records published in
LOON.

Jim MATTHEWSON

Pete, et al.

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Jim MATTHEWSON

95-11

Date: March 22, 1995. Time: 12:30pm. Weather: sky overcast, winds ENE 10-15 mph. Lighting: flat, very little contrast. I observed a probable dark phase Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) at the Louisa Division of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge near Wapello, Iowa. Refuge biologist, Michael Bornstein, and I were at the entrance gate preparing to tour the area, when I noted 6-7 buteos soaring in the vicinity. I then noted a dark buteo flying away just above the ground at a distance of about 250-300 m. Unable to stop the vehicle to use my binoculars, I was left with a confusing impression of an oversized female harrier with no white on the rump. This impression was based on the bird's silhouette: long tail, long wings, and occasional side-to-side tipping or rocking as it left the area. Michael did not notice the bird at this time. Five minutes later, Michael and I returned to the area, and what appeared to be the same bird flew across the road about 100 meters ahead at a height of perhaps 5-10 m. Michael quickly said the bird looked like a Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) but just as quickly noted that a white rump patch was lacking and the bird was too large for a harrier. My impression at first glance was that of a dark phase Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) based mostly on the slight wing dihedral and the larger-than-harrier size. By the time we were able to get binoculars on the bird it was 150 m away. It flew low and landed in a tree about 250 m away. As it landed, a full view of the back and upper surface of wings and tail was presented. The upper back and wing coverts were a deep rust color that contrasted with very dark secondary and primary flight feathers. The wings tips were black and contrasted with lighter grayish windows formed at the base of the primaries. The windows were somewhat less evident than on white phase Ferruginous hawks I have seen in the West. The tail was a uniform, dull gray darkening only slightly toward the tip, but not forming a band. The bird perched for several minutes and provided a side profile. We noted that while the breast and belly were mostly dark with small amounts of light mottling, the top and back of the head appeared mottled and buffy in color, contrasting with the breast and back. The bird then flew and we watched it soar directly overhead for several minutes. From below, the body, throat, and wing coverts were overall very dark and contrasted strongly with very uniform, unbarred whitish-gray flight feathers. The underside of the tail was a uniform gray shaded very slightly darker toward the tip. The silhouette showed longer (and slightly pointed) wings and tail compared to 2 red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) that were soaring nearby. Due to the gusty winds and flat light conditions, legs and feet were not seen clearly. Feet were dull and colorless in the flat light and tarsi were not visible, but it was not clearly determined whether or not tarsi were fully or partially feathered. The bird held its wings in a slight dihedral which was evident as it soared and occasionally rocked slightly from side to side. The impression of a small golden eagle came to mind as I compared its silhouette to the nearby red-taileds. The bird sailed away to the east and shortly thereafter, a female Northern harrier appeared and provided an almost immediate, albeit not simultaneous, comparison with the subject bird. Both Michael and I have seen many Ferruginous hawks in the western states, and I have seen dark phase birds on two occasions. The bird was most similar to the dark phase rough-legged hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) in size and general shape, but the latter species lacks the deep rust coloration on the upper wing coverts, scapulars, and upper back, and also has some dark banding on the outer one-half of the tail. Although by no means a conclusive characteristic, the subject bird did not hover during the period we observed it, a characteristic typical of hunting Rough-legged hawks. Dark phase Swainson's hawk have much darker, barred flight feathers and tail when viewed from below than that of the subject bird.

Submitted by James P. Mattsson, c/o Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge, 1704 N. 24th St., Quincy, IL 62301

95-11



Ferruginous hawk
Louisa Division
Maek Twaia NWR
Iowa
3-22-95

J. MATTHEWSON

Did not have

Light
not
visible

Tail
longer
than
R. tail

Very
light

Head lighter
than
back
R. tail
Chest
Dark
W. tail

W. tail seen
shortly after
marked
marked

Seen w/ R. tails

Dark phase Ferruginous Hawk
22 MARCH 1995
Louisiana Div. Mark Twain area

Brown/Baldy
Mottled - Dark w/ small patches white

Gray (uniform)
- Shade darker towards tip
Tail longer than under wing

Very dark

Uniform
Gray

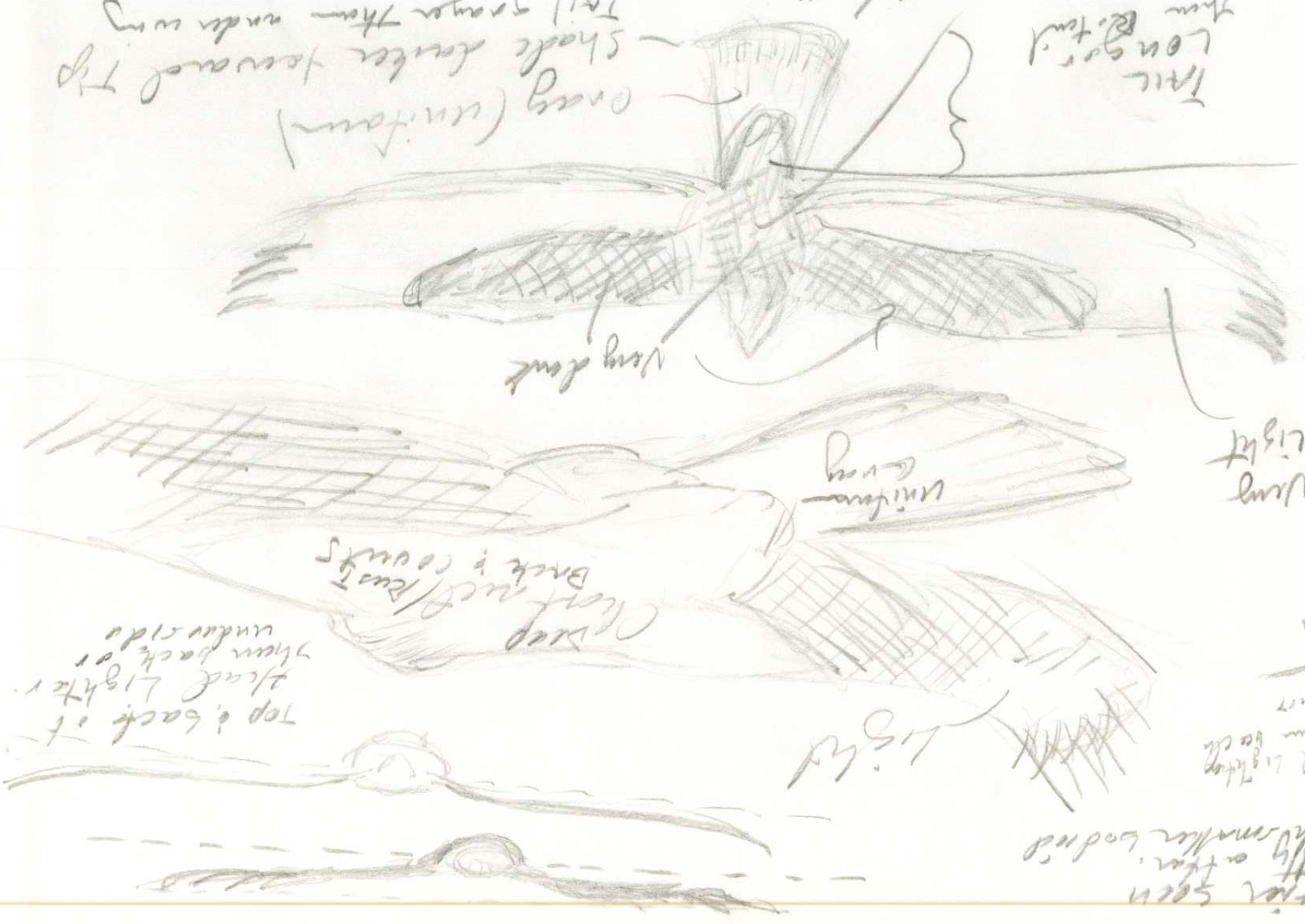
Dark
Back & counts

Light

Top of back of
head lighter
than back of
under side

11-516

J. MATTHEW
4:00 PM
3-22-95



Lighter Cap on IS
 lighter back buff
 Head Throat buff
 Chestnut/Rust



lighter primary
 base of primary

LONG Pull Gray "head" tip
 Tail slightly down but no "band"

Secondary almost
 looked almost
 black, much
 contrast w/
 Rusty Coverts/Back

J. MATTHEW
 4:10 pm
 3-22-95