

Gyr Falcon

17 Oct 1993

nw of Denison, Crawford Co., IA

\*Dan Eiten

IBL 64:12, 69

Record Number: 93-23

Classification: NA

## DOCUMENTATION

Dan Eiten, 25 N 16th St., Denison 51442 [2/23/94]

## LETTER

Jim Fuller to Dan Eiten, 29 Oct 1993

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:12

Records Committee: IBL 64:69

## VOTE: 7 NA

NA, Without more description of wing shape and flight pattern I cannot accept. If bird described indeed was a Gyr Falcon it becomes even more rarer because of its Greenland race.

NA, Gyr Falcon is such a rare bird in Iowa and needs to be described in detail. In addition, white-phase Gyrs are the rarest form to reach the Midwest. There is no description of size, shape, and wing length. Several raptors have yellow feet and legs. The description of white spots on back leads me to think that the back was primarily some other color or darker in some way.

NA, Possibly a correct record. The date is not unreasonable, and the location possible, although far south of normal winter range. Unfortunately, the description does not completely rule out Red-tail, the most variable raptor in N. America, ranging from snow white underparts and pale upper parts to black overall. Although the observer felt it didn't look like a Red-tail, some of the description was suggestive of Red-tail. Despite the pictures in bird books, some red-tails have snow white, completely unmarked underparts. The back was described as speckled with white, implying a darker background. A whiter Gyr should have a white back(ground) flecked with black, like an immature Snowy Owl. Yellow legs applies to a host of raptors, including red-tails. Probability should also be considered. From my understanding, White Gyr Falcon is by far the rarest morph to show up in the upper-Midwest/S. Central Canada. While exceptions occur, the Law of Probability is not with us on this one.

NA, The brief descriptive comments leave too many possibilities still open.

NA, I'm not sure what this hawk was -- perhaps a Krider's? More details are necessary to absolutely identify this bird, but I do appreciate Mr. Eiten's attempt.

NA, Could be the albinistic Red-tail photographed by B. J. Rose in western Iowa (I don't have the date or location). I visited the area, and there were lots of Red-tails. White-phase Gyr Falcon very unlikely.

NA, Not enough of a description is included in the documentation to completely say that this is a Gyr Falcon. I know several others on the committee will say that what is given is enough to make this a good Gyr Falcon sighting but an albinistic or leucistic individual of another more common species has not been ruled out.

October 29, 1993

Dan Eiten  
25 N. 16th Street  
Denison, Iowa, 51442

Dear Dan,

Thanks for reporting your Gyrfalcon sighting to the Iowa Birdline. That is a great bird anywhere, but especially so in Iowa, and I know a lot of people will be interested. I have enclosed an Iowa Ornithologist's Union documentation form, and if you decide to complete it, please return it to me.

The bird may be just passing through, but it also might establish a winter territory in your area. I would sure like to know about it if you see it again. If it does stay in your area, I would guess that its prey would most likely be gallinaceous birds like pheasant or gray partridge, as well as pigeons, and that it would roost at night in an unused barn or other building.

A person in your area who would be interested in your sighting is Pete Ernzen, the Ida County naturalist.

Best regards,

Jim Fuller  
6 Longview Knoll, NE  
Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

What species? Gyr Falcon How many? 1 93-23

Location? Hammock Top Crawford County Ia 6 1/2 NW Denison

Type of habitat? Near Benfield on Field Fencepost

When? date(s): October 17 [1993] time: 2:00pm to

Who? your name and address: Don Eitan 25 N 14th St Denison Ia 51544

others with you: Asian

others before or after you: \_\_\_\_\_

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 not a confirmed Bird watcher I feel the Bird I observed was indeed a Gyr Falcon Because of my proximity to it. When observed from a truck I was about 2 car lengths from the Falcon. He was sitting on a fence post looking directly at me. His chest, lower body and head from the front were white as he turned I saw specks of white on his back, Black stripes on the edges of his wings. The feet were a golden yellow. As we passed he took wing away from us and my observation was the wing shape was different from a Red Tail. But that was all of the wing shape that come to mind. I see lots of Red Tail Hawks and again not being a Red Bird watcher all comparisons were to a Hawk. I asked several people immediately after returning to the park (Yellow Snake Park Crawford County) →

Similar species and how eliminated:

None

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Good Afternoon Sunlight Best view was 25 ft away Bird was sitting on a fence post I was in a truck directly Beside it.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

None

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Alan D. Ouse Crawford County Conservation Board Field Guide to North American Birds  
How long before field notes made? immediately this form completed? Nov 1 1993

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

and right away Park Ranger Al Disburg thought it  
was a Gyr. But I dismissed the thought since he  
said they were so rare. I made several other inquiries  
and all came back to the Gyr Falcon. It was not  
until I looked at the Bird Book when I "officially"  
confirmed him. In ~~essentially~~ a Gyr Falcon was observed  
in the country about 4 years ago.

Hope this helps you, I'm a bit overwhelmed  
but all the phone calls and am just beginning to  
cope with this notariety

Don Eley

93-23