

Ferruginous Hawk
9 Aug 1998
west of Ogden, Boone Co., IA
Rodger Junck
IBL 69:33

Record Number: 98-22
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Rodger Junck, 206 Trail Ridge Rd., Ames [2/28/99]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:33
Records Committee: IBL 69:90

VOTE: 7-NA

NA, I almost voted A-D on this record until I revisited the leg issue. The documentation described "white feathery legs," but did not specify whether this meant feathered tarsi. Red-tails have long leg feathers that hang down over the tarsi, giving the impression of feathered legs. The other features (white head, perception of size) were supportive of the ID as Ferruginous, but were not conclusive. Light Red-tails can have pale heads, and, regarding size, there is little difference between the two species. Red-tails are the most variable of North American hawks. I saw several yesterday that had virtually unmarked, white breasts, similar to the bird described.

NA, There is not enough information provided to identify the bird. The observer noted the white underparts, head, and legs, but did not describe the rest of the bird. As seen from below, an adult Ferruginous would show rufous or barred rufous-and-white leg feathers and dark wingtips. An immature Ferruginous could appear mostly white from below, but would show dark wingtips and a faintly-banded brownish tail, and the head usually has a dark eyeline. Perhaps this was a large albino Red-tailed Hawk.

NA, A Ferruginous Hawk with white feathering on legs would have to be an immature, which should have a prominent eyeline and crown and nape dark streaked, not an "all white head". Ferruginous, especially immature, is very difficult to ID. To accept, would like wing/tail length, wing shape, wing angle in flight. There has never been a summer record of this species from Iowa or states to the east.

NA, Parts of this description sound extremely good for Ferruginous but there are enough problems that I cannot totally rule out Krider's. The variability in size of Red-tailed Hawk makes judgement of size fairly irrelevant. I'm not sure how far down the leg the white feathering extended. If they reached the toes, that might have clinch this one. However, white leg feathers indicate an immature bird and the head sounds too white for me. Head description more nearly fits Krider's, especially as it was viewed from the side. Ferruginous immature should show more of a dark cap.

NA, White feathered legs would indicate an immature bird, but such a bird should have a brownish head (light or dark). Without

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a description of the undertail pattern, or back and upper wing pattern, this bird is not definitely identifiable. Krider's Red-tail does have a white head.

NA, Red-tails can be all white below, have light heads, and can appear to have feathered legs when perched. Size is subjective. In order to accept such a rare bird at an unusual date many more details are needed (bill size, gape, white on upper wings, tail color, wing shape, etc.). Such details are often hard to evaluate during a brief encounter.

NA, Size on a single bird difficult to judge, especially one so white. No features mentioned that fit Ferruginous Hawk--bird would be an immature if not rufous on legs. Date also questionable for Ferruginous Hawk.

What species? Ferruginous Hawk How many? 1 98-22

Location? 1/4 ml. West of Ogan Iowa main street, on gravel road at T intersection by railroad tracks

Type of habitat? Grassy rail road right of way bordered by corn/soybean fields

When? date(s): Aug 9 '98 (Sunday) time: 9:30 AM to 9:35 AM

Who? your name and address: Rodger Junck 206 Trail Ridge Rd Ames Iowa

others with you: Yes - sister

others before or after you: none I know of

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.

First observed sitting on top of Electric pole - just going airborne as we approached in car. We had been birding all that morning, but were briefly froze with awe at the sight of this very large hawk, and it was white! We stopped - it circled back to land atop same pole - but decided not to. We were out of car by this time - it circled once more as we began to actually look at it. It was all white from below, except for a few rows of ^{light} chocolate brown running along underside from body out to perhaps 1/4 of the wing length. Size was 20% to 25% larger than red tails I have seen. It then swept down to just above the grass, heading away from us, gliding. It then pulled up and landed on a fencepost about 50 yards away from us. Fortunately, it was sitting directly west of us with the sun to our backs. We were able to view it thru 10x24 and 10x50 binoculars for about 1 minutes, before it flew on to the west - low. It was at this time we were able to see that it had white feathered legs and an all white head (this was a side view the whole time it sat on this post). These two features were the ones that most impressed us, beside how white it appeared overhead. One other thing is that, while sitting in side view, the area just below the folded wings appeared whiter than the white on the belly and the light color of the wings. I think this was just a 'relative' effect - the rest of the belly and the wing were not all white.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Most familiar with red-tails. I have had more than a dozen of them at a time circling my combine during harvest. Have seen them displaying against each other over a rabbit as well. In fact I see them most days - but they are considerably too small, and, except for the knickers, would be wrong color. I have no info on if knickers have a white head and white feathered legs.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?

If yes, explain: My sister did not know what it was. Neither did I until I researched it. Her impression was "Could it be an all white bald eagle" at the time. But after researching it, she believes as I do.

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

Sunny day, sun to back, calm, close white overhead (briefly) - height of electric pole about 30 feet (I have a 50ft silo for my own comparison/calibration). Distance to fence post about half length of football field - perhaps a little less. 10x24 binoculars 10x50 "

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

First with Ferruginous. But very familiar with red-tails. Believe a 10% difference in size would be very noticeable to me.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Jim Fuller and Steller's Eastern field Guide

How long before field notes made? 2 hrs - talked this form completed? 5 weeks
about it for awhile immediately afterwards with sister

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Sept 13 '998 Rodger Junck