

Ferruginous Hawk
5 Oct 1994
NE, Madison Co., IA
*Eloise Armstrong
IBL 65:13

Record Number: 94-26
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Eloise Armstrong, Van Meter, IA 50261 [2/23/95]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:13

Records Committee: [not cited by mistake, IBL 65:82]

VOTE: 3 A-D, 4 NA

A-D, While this record has some pitfalls such as failure to see all the diagnostic field marks and after-the-fact identification that may have been influenced by field guides and discussion with another birder, the documentation and the credibility of the observer provide enough evidence to put identification beyond reasonable doubt. Specifically, the description of the white wing patch at the base of the primaries when seen from above, and the white unbanded tail and rump separate this species from the very similar Krider's Red-tail. Supportive is the habitat, date, perception of wing shape and flight style. Keep in mind that this observer has had long experience with Red-tails, and should be qualified to discern a non Red-tail buteo at a glance. The observer should, in the future, more carefully read the instructions on the documentation form. Distance of view, length of viewing time, and viewing conditions should have been included.

NA, The body shape, wing shape, upperwing color pattern, underwing color, white leading edge to the wing, and white tail are descriptive of Ferruginous Hawk. The unseen characters no rufous leggings, white head, and feathered tarus are detracting since this bird was seen well for 5 min. I have seen Redtails with pure white blotches in the wing and a white tail, I guessed these to be partially albino Redtails. The sighting is not beyond reasonable doubt in my estimation, and therefore I must vote NA. The observer also fail to report an estimated sighting distance.

NA, This one is a tough call. Habitat and jizz are certainly suggestive. Much of the description fits for juvenile Ferruginous. The documentation does not give me information on the distance this bird was from the observer. Juvenile Ferruginous shows a dusky subterminal tailband. The inability to see any banding on the tail suggests that his bird was some distance away. Since distance can impact some of the the necessary nuances for absolute identification, I cannot be certain that this was not pale variant of a Red-tailed Hawk. Because of the various plumages of Red-tails seen in the state, especially during migration, Iowa records of Ferruginous Hawk will no doubt always be held to a very high standard.

A-D, All of the field marks fit immature Ferruginous Hawk. White wing patches with white rump and white patagium seem to completely eliminate an odd red-tail. After writing this I received the following comments from Ken Brock, regional editor for Field Notes, "Ferruginous Hawk: Documentation inadequate. Unbanded tail indicates the bird was an adult, but the rufous leg feathers were not noted. White in the primaries usually forms a trapezoid shape (not oval). There was no mention of rusty on the upper wing coverts. I suspect the bird was a Krider's, which can sometimes lack the dark patagial mark."

NA, This seems to be a light Krider's type Red-tailed Hawk. Light hawks of this phase have light or white patagial area with white tails, rumps, belly, and underwings. Had long broad wings; should have been long and narrow. Not all Red-tails have red or pink in the tails nor do they have tail bands. I have seen a number like this. Only thing that suggests Ferruginous is oval shaped wing patches and slow and easy flight, not diagnostic considering other features of bird.

NA, View of underwing should allow view of patagial mark if present. Not mentioned. Also rufous coloration in upperparts -- also not mentioned. I think this bird may have been a Ferruginous, but key field marks not discussed.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

94-26

What species? Ferruginous Hawk How many? 1

Location? Lee Twp NE Madison County

Type of Habitat? Grasslands

When? date(s): October 5, 1994 time: 5 PM to 5:10 PM

Who? your name and address: Eloise Armstrong Van Meter, IA 50261

Others with you: Eugene Armstrong

Others before or after you: No one

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

A large mostly white hawk on belly, tail, rump and underwings. Long broad wings - upper wings had white (ova) patches in them. Seen as soon as the bird turned. Underwings mostly white with dark spotting on them. White trailing edge on wings close to body. Heavy body. Long tapered wings. All white rump and tail. Didn't see any pink in tail. No dark band either. Didn't notice stockings or yellow legs as only saw bird flying. Wing beats were slow and easy. Thought of an eagle in flight.



Similar species; how eliminated:

A Redtailed Hawk
has outer white tail band
and Red or Barred Tail. Flight
is quite rapid - wings are
shorter and more rounded
Has larger square window in wing

Knider's Red Tail
Does not have very white under-
wing. Has a larger square window
further out on wings. Has a
dark stripe on tail. Doesn't
have a white rump.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? yes - me

If yes, explain: Couldn't ID until I thought about it a bit and Eugene told me what marks to look for. They were there.

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

Easing viewing evening light
8.5x44 Swift And Binocs

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen a lot of them out West.
Always observe and keep count of hawks on our trips

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Dunne's "Hawks in Flight"
National Geo. "Birds of Amer."

How long before field notes made? 15 min this form completed? 4 days

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).