

Ferruginous Hawk 1
8 May 1990
Princeton Marsh, Scott Co., IA
P. Petersen
IBL 60:65, 67, 62:22

Record Number: 90-08
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Peter C. Petersen

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:65, 67

Records Committee: IBL 62:21

VOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

A-D: Document does not mention any dihedral in wings when soaring. Similar species as red tail does not always carry breast band and tail color can be rusty red to nonexistent.

NA: The field marks mentioned are consistent with Ferruginous Hawk. However, it is well known that this species is difficult to evaluate (at least in Iowa) and more details should be provided. When I encounter a brief description like this, I assume either the bird was not well seen or the observer was not thorough in recording the details. In either case, it makes the record more difficult to accept.

A-D: Details correct for Ferruginous Hawk but I would have liked to have had more information on the shape and length of the wings and tail, shape of windows, and a notation that the patagial marks were indeed missing instead of just not being mentioned. There are Red-tailed Hawks that are white below with no belly band, do not have a patagial mark, and do have white at the base of the tail (Wilson, Iowa Bird Life 56:4). Also the date of 8 May seems late for a migrating Ferruginous. Despite these reservations, I feel the combination of rusty legs, pale underparts and white tail with rusty tip do describe an adult pale-morph Ferruginous Hawk.

NA: While this report is suggestive, I don't feel Red-tail is eliminated. "Rusty at tale base (legs)" is not specific. Was the tail base rusty, or were the legs? The next description of the tail "very light, appeared white at base, a pale rust to tip" was more suggestive of a Ferruginous. With regard to the wing patches, Wilson (IBL 56:4) "the white patch on the upper surface of a Krider's may be identical to that of a Ferruginous..." A more detailed description of the patches would have been helpful. With regard to the unbanded breast, I saw a Red-tail this weekend without a breast band - a pure white breast is not uncommon on a Krider's.

Ferruginous Hawk is extremely rare in Iowa, especially in eastern Iowa, and is difficult to separate from Red-tails. Exhaustive documentation should be provided for all sightings.

A-D: All critical field marks were seen for a light phase Ferruginous Hawk. Why is it that no one ever sees Ferruginous Hawks for a long period of time at say less than a 100 yds or closer. Reluctantly vote A-D.

NA: Description does not adequately rule out Red-tailed Hawk. I have seen many Red-tailed Hawks with little or no markings on

the breast. I do not agree that Red-tailed Hawks do not have windows in the wing when seen from above. Most of the Red-tailed Hawks I have seen (especially immatures) have a rectangular "window" showing from above and below. The shape and size of the window was not described. The patagium was not even mentioned. The coloration of the tail as given still does not rule out Red-tailed. The coloration of the back and upper surface of the wings was not given. Not all Red-tailed's have a uniform rusty red colored tail (especially the lighter phase birds). No mention of the overall shape and flight pattern of the bird either. All of the main field marks that should be noted on a Ferruginous Hawk omitted in this documentation.

A-D: While I agree with the documentation, more details would have been appreciated. What was the wing shape and length? Were they long, narrow wings in a dihedral? Did the underside of the wings show that the patagial mark was missing? Was any rufous or rusty markings on the shoulders showing on the top side? And under similar species - Red-tailed Hawks vary widely from the adult Red-tailed type mentioned. More details are much preferred to just the bare minimum on a controversial Iowa Bird.
RESULT OF 2ND REVIEW: 1 A-D; 6 NA

A-D: More minute details would have helped but I still accept the document.

N-A: It was interesting that even some of the accepting commenters were left with a desire for more detail and analysis. I think this observer is aware of the historical difficulty in Iowa of evaluating records of this species. This should lead to an awareness of the need to document this species carefully. I am left with the feeling the bird was not seen very well or was described sort of casually.

NA: While I do not agree that "All main field marks that should be noted on a Ferruginous Hawk" were omitted, I do agree that the sparcity of details made this a difficult decision. I still believe that if the rusty legs and white tail with rusty tip were seen well, this would be a Ferruginous Hawk. Unfortunately, this part of the documentation is somewhat unclear. In addition, Ferruginous Hawks do not often migrate very far from their normal range, and May 8 is not the time one would be expected in eastern Iowa. Considering these points plus the distance at which the bird was observed, I now feel there is a reasonable doubt, therefore I am changing my vote to NA.

NA: Even the A-D votes on this record were equivocal. In view of the doubts express by both the NA and the A-D votes, I am not convinced this is beyond reasonable doubt.

NA: I am changing my vote to NA based on several NA's comments that more substantiating detail is required. However, I must caution that in a 2 min view at this distance we can not expect more detail than this. I plan not to vote NA on future Ferruginous Hawk reports unless a combination of closeness and time sighted make it obvious that perception can be checked several times for verification.

NA: Nothing in the comments from the A-D reviewers gives any additional impetus for me to vote as such myself. Two of the A-D

reviewers mention enough detail missing from the documentation to make this sighting less than beyond reasonable doubt.

NA: I feel I must change my vote to NA. I reluctantly voted A-D on the first round. After reviewing the comments of the other members and considering my own misgivings, I need to vote NA. This documentation is too sketchy. Great detail is needed to properly evaluate a Ferruginous Hawk.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

90-08

What species? Ferruginous Hawk How many? 1

Location? Princeton Marsh, Scott Co. IA.

Type of Habitat? bird flying of marsh agricultural area

When? date(s): May 8, 1990 time: 1:30 to 1:32 P.M. EDT

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport, IA 52803

Others with you: Brian Blevins, Don Moeller

Others before or after you: none to our knowledge

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.

Large baton circling overhead to north. very light below, except tips of primaries dark, rusty at tail base (legs) + black "comma" at base of primaries. When it banked the upper surface of the wings showed large white patches or windows at base of primaries, tail very light, appeared white at base, a pale rust to tip.

Similar species; how eliminated: Red-tailed Hawk. no windows from above, legs white, has breast band, tail uniform rusty red.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Sun behind observers, bird to north on a sunny day, est. range - ²⁵⁰⁻400 mi. increasing as bird circled north - 10x40 Zeiss binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: All observers had seen ^{species} ~~bird~~ on many occasions in the west + previously in Iowa (P.P. & B.B.). Moeller had seen in Colorado very recently.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none - checked Geo garde later

How long before field notes made? 5-10 min this form completed? 9 hrs.

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