

Ferruginous Hawk
23 Apr 1991
n. of Thornton, Cerro Gordo Co., IA
*Carolyn Fisher, *Rita Goranson
IBL 61:91, 62:71

Record Number: 91-07
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS:

Carolyn Fisher, 48 Lakeview Ct., Mason City, IA 50401
Rite Goranson, 115 Lakeview Ct., Mason City, IA 50401

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:91
Records Committee: IBL 62:71

VOTE: 7-NA

NA, Document does not eliminate all plumages of red tailed Hawk. Red tails come in so many different plumages that more description of wing angle and flight patterns are needed to be acceptable.

NA, While this hawk showed some features that suggest Ferruginous Hawk (large size, white tail, and leggings). I voted NA for the following reasons: First of all, a Krider's Hawk or a light Red-tail would more likely have the mottled dark brown upperparts described in this documentation. A Ferruginous would show little mottling and rufous wing coverts. Second, many Red-tails do not show a belly band. The lack of same cannot be used to distinguish other species. In addition, many Red-tailed can be very light under the wings with dark tips to the primaries and "white blotches" on the upperwing. Ferruginous Hawks also, in my experience, appear "light-headed", not dark crowned. There was no mention of dark wrist mark and no specific mention of lack of patagial mark, nor the shape of the wing windows. There was also no mention of the general shape of the bird and its wings.

NA, Ferruginous Hawk is one of the toughest identification problems in Iowa. Habitat was supportive of the ID, as Ferruginous Hawk is a bird of open areas, as well as the fact that Spring is a good time for one to show up. However, most of the other field marks such as tail color and wing patches on the upper surface often also apply to Krider's Red-tail. Comparison of size, in this case with Krider's, is difficult without side-by-side birds. With regard to the feathered tarsi, this is diagnostic. But most authorities stress the need for an excellent view, which normally means a bird at rest and a good scope. Your bird was flying, and we don't know how close you were to it. For several reasons, we require a very high level of scrutiny for Ferruginous Hawk. It is declining, and its range is imperfectly known. It is easily confused for the much more common and highly variable Red-tail. Its status in Iowa has been a mystery for years. Therefore, we need to be extremely cautious with what winds up in the ornithological record. I encourage you to dig out the Fall, 1986 IBL. The article on Ferruginous Hawk identification details the problems we all face with ID of this species.

NA, All the features noted are consistent with Red-tailed Hawk.

NA, Not enough detail described to eliminate Red-tailed Hawk. Immature Ferruginous Hawk are difficult to separate from very similar Red-tailed. The Red-tailed Hawk is so variable that the bird described here does not rule out that species. White patches (blotches) not fully described. A lot of Red-tailed Hawks have white breast. No dark wrist mark described. Feathered tarsi is very difficult to see and would not be feathered all the way to the talons anyway. A bird in flight might appear this way. Descriptions not beyond reasonable doubt for this species.

NA, Many more details are needed to determine the species of this buteo. Red-tailed Hawks vary considerably in size and coloration. An immature Krider's Hawk is a strong possibility for this hawk. Most helpful would have been details on where the white blotches on the upper wings were -- were they large and parallel to the body or thin and perpendicular the body and almost out to the wing tips? Were the wings in a dihedral in flight or generally flat? Did the wings look extra long -- longer than a normal Red-tail's? Was a patagial mark on the underside observed or was it missing? Sometimes Redtails can appear to be feathered toward the toes while perched with their leggings hanging down. Please continue to submit documentations and include as much information and details as possible.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

91-07

What species? Ferruginous Hawk (immature light-phase) How many? 1Location? North of Thornton on Eagle Ave. between 140-150 roads -
Cerro Gordo county, IaType of Habitat? shortgrass meadow, open area -When? date(s): 4-23-91 time: 6:15 ^{p.m.} to 6:30Who? your name and address: Carolyn Fischer, 48 Lakeview Ct. Mason City, IaOthers with you: Rita Branson, 115 Lakeview Drive, Mason City,Others before or after you: no

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.

Watched a very large buteo descending down in a open country area, low to the ground - noticed very white tail and white underside, had dark brown above, dark tip primaries and dark along the trailing edge - appeared to have white blotches on upper wing surface -

Similar species; how eliminated:

Krider's Hawk (this hawk was larger in size than a Krider's)

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no

If yes, explain:

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

Clear day, sky was blue - had Bausch + Lomb 8X36 binoculars -

Previous experience with species and similar ones: have not seen one before
4-23-91 hawks in flight (Pete Dunne)

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Society
Audubon Society Master Guide.

How long before field notes made? immediately this form completed? 1 wk.

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

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? immature light phase ferruginous hawk
 How Many? one
 Location? between 140th & 150th St. on Eagle ave., Grimes township,
 Cerro Gordo county, Iowa
 Habitat? in area of 10 year set aside acres, so open grassland with an
 occassional tree , only a few buildings with trees.
 Date? April 23, 1991
 Time? 6:15 pm
 Observers Name and address: Rita Goranson, 115 Lakeview Drive,
 Mason City, Iowa

Others who saw bird:
 Carolyn Fischer (one had been in area two years previous, said
 Description of bird: area farmer, Paul Willis)
 SEE BELOW

Similar species and how eliminated: Imm. redtailed hawk: show
 darker band underneath tail, darker area under wings, and
 legs are not feathered to toes (Krider does not have feathers to
 Viewing conditions and equipment: toes nor dark crown.)
 clear and sunny Baush & Lomb 8 x 36 wide angle

Previous experience with species:
 Had seen one one other time in 1989 in Eastern Nebraska

References consulted: The Audubon Society Master Guide #1,
 Peterson Field guide Eastern, Peterson F. G. HAWKS

How long before field notes were made?
 immediately
 How long before this form was completed?
 four days

Description: Mottled dark brown above with a white tail,
 whitish underneath from chin to tail, a few darker spots on
 chest, a dark crown on head with white under chin. White
 patchers on outer wings underneath and light-colored underneath
 entire wing: light colored all the way to talons
 feathers

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? If yes explain:
 Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
 Clear day, sky was blue - had Baush & Lomb 8x36
 binoculars -
 Previous experience with species and similar ones: have not been one before
 4-23-91
 References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Society
 Audubon Society, Master Guide
 How long before field notes made? immediately
 How long before this form completed? four days
 Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird List)