

Ferruginous Hawk
22 Sep 1984
west of Liscomb, Marshall Co., IA
*B. Proescholdt, *M. Proescholdt
IBL 54:111; 55:56; Proescholdt 1985

Record Number: 84-24
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Beth Proescholdt
Mark Proescholdt

NOTE

[Silcock], submitted with review

OUTSIDE REVIEW

Kim Eckert to Kent (see below)
William S. Clark (see Wilson 1988)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 54:111
Records Committee: IBL 55:56
Proescholdt, B. 1985. Ferruginous Hawk in central Iowa. IBL
55:74-75.
Wilson, B. L. 1988. Records of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa. IBL
58:95-100.

VOTE: 6-III, 1-V

III, Seems to hit major field marks, were such wing markers
put on Ferruginous Hawks recently?

III, These observers noted the key marks on a probable
immature.

III, I give both (Laurens and Liscomb) III, albeit
reluctantly. I doubt that many birders are aware of tremendous
variation in Red-tails, many have white heads, tails, wing
patches and unstreaked underparts. Laurens bird seems more
definite with feathered legs being seen, although that can depend
on position of legs. Liscomb bird not seen as closely.

V, None of the descriptions positively support a Ferruginous.
Northern and western races of Red-tailed Hawks as subadults
resemble the Hawk Proescholdts described.

IV [counted as III--see below/tk], Also very possibly a
Ferruginous (could we find (see attached sheet) out who tagged
the bird?). To identify immatures, it is important to note the
absence of a dark area on the leading edge of the inner
underwing. However, the description does not clearly eliminate a
pale Red-tail. I called Marc Bechard of Idaho (who published with
Stuart Houston an article in AB (38:166) about declining
Ferruginous nesting in Saskatchewan. He stated that 2 people had
used red petagial tags on Ferruginous Hawks, both in the right
wing: (1) Ron Gains, Dept Zool, NDSU, Fargo 58105. He used red
tags with white lettering. Apparently Beth Proescholdt has been
in touch with him and he is fairly sure this is a bird banded by
him in Kidder Co., ND, in 1984. Unfortunately Beth did not see
any lettering on the red tag. (2) R. L. Linder, Coop Unit, Dept
Wildlife, SDSU, Brookings 57007. He used red tags with black
lettering. Apparently he did not reply (as yet) to Beth's letter
to him. Thus the bird (a) is a Ferruginous Hawk, (b) came from
either North or South Dakota. My feeling is that it would be

easier to overlook black lettering on a red tag than white lettering on a red tag.

III, Note: Report should be sent to Bird banding lab, both to let them know a marked bird was seen, and to confirm that someone has been marking Ferruginous Hawks. Will you send it in, Tom?'

OUTSIDE REVIEW: I sent these documentations to Kim Eckert and this is his reply (tk): "Proescholdt record is acceptable with some reservations. The only mark of any consequence was Beth's description of the position of the white wing patches matching the painting in Geographic which is accurate portrayal of where the patches are. If they weren't unduly influenced by the field guides (i.e., they think they remembered the marks the field guide told them they should have seen) and if the observers are reliable/experienced (I have no reason to doubt this) then I'd go along with this."

REVOTE (by mail): 7-III

Proescholdt, B. 1985. Ferruginous Hawk in central Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 55:74-75.

Ferruginous Hawk in Central Iowa — On the morning of 22 Sept. 1984, following a day of heavy hawk migration along the Iowa River in Marshall County, my son Mark and I were heading for a ridge paralleling the river, hoping for another day of good hawk migration. But before we got there, when we were a half mile west of Liscomb in northwest Marshall County and a mile from the river, a large hawk came flying across the rolling fields toward us.

At first glance I thought it was a Northern Harrier as it swooped low over the fields with its wings at a slight dihedral. But instead it was a large buteo, appearing larger than a Red-tailed Hawk, with a long wingspread. As it came flying toward our car we saw the almost completely white undersides and white head and I thought "Ferruginous" at once, although there were no rusty leggings. As it tilted on the strong south winds, we saw the dark brown upper parts of its body, shoulders, and wings (with no rufous showing), a white tail with a pinkish tip, and large white patches on the upper wings centered at the base of the inner primaries — not at the wing tips.

We checked our guides, Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*, 1980, and *Birds of North America* by Robbins, et al, without satisfactory answers. National Geographic's *Birds of North America* showed the white undersides of an immature Ferruginous with no rusty leggings and white upper wing patches exactly where we had seen them.

Consulting Kim Eckert's *A Birder's Guide to Minnesota* we read: "A buteo with dark legs or rufous back has to be a Ferruginous (but they don't all have these marks). On the other hand, a buteo that looks really large, that has a white head and underparts and has a whitish or pinkish tail doesn't have to be a Ferruginous (may Red-taileds can look as large without direct comparison, and Krider's types can be just as pale). Look for the Ferruginous' white patch on the upper wing surface centered at the base of the inner primaries, and if you see a buteo with a white patch on the outer primaries close to the wingtips, it's an immature Red-tailed, not a Ferruginous."

From the new *Iowa Birds*, Dinsmore, et al, we read: "Immatures may lack rufous coloration." So after much searching we were finally fully convinced that this buteo was an immature Ferruginous Hawk.

Iowa Birds, Dinsmore, et al, lists the status of Ferruginous Hawk as "casual, predominantly migrant." There are only 35 records with dates scattered over the years. In addition, this book has these comments: "Ferruginous Hawks breed in the grasslands of the western plains, including W. Nebraska and W. South Dakota. Most migrate south in winter, but some remain in the north or move eastward. Migrants wander as far east as Iowa and very rarely to Illinois and Indiana. The distribution pattern in Iowa suggests that the species is more common in western Iowa, especially when one considers that the eastern part of the state is birded more intensively. This species is easily overlooked, so it may be more common than the records indicate. However, it is also likely that some of the published records represent misidentified light phase Red-tailed Hawks."

Of especial interest to us was a reddish-orange tag about 3" x 4" on the upper right wing. Dave Newhouse, non-game biologist for the Iowa Conservation Commission, obtained names of those who have been tagging Ferruginous Hawks in adjacent states — one in South Dakota and one in North Dakota.

After contacting them I received a reply from Ronald C. Gaines, a graduate student at North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota. He has been tagging Ferruginous Hawks over the past two years. Green wing tags were used in 1983, red in 1984. So even though we saw no tag number, Gaines said that no doubt this Ferruginous Hawk was tagged by him in Kidder County, North Dakota, in the spring of 1984. — Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowa 50148

LITERATURE CITED

- Anderson, R. M. 1907. The birds of Iowa. Proc. Davenport Acad. Sci. 11:125-417.
- Bohlen, H. D. 1986. The status of Ferruginous Hawk in Illinois. Illinois Birds and Birding 2:40-41.
- Brown, W. H. 1971. An annotated list of the birds of Iowa. Iowa State J. Sci. 45:387-469.
- Clark, W. S. and B. K. Wheeler. 1987. A Field Guide to Hawks North America. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- DuMont, P. A. 1929. [no title]. Bull. Iowa Ornithologists Union 7:23.
- DuMont, P. A. 1933. A Revised List of the Birds of Iowa. Iowa City: University of Iowa Studies in Natural History, Vol 15.
- DuMont, P. A. 1934. Observations of the Ferruginous Rough-leg in Iowa. Wilson Bull. 46:262.
- Gilmer, D. S., D. L. Evans, P. M. Konrad, and R. E. Stewart. 1985. Recoveries of Ferruginous Hawks banded in south-central North Dakota. J. Field Ornithol. 56:184-187.
- I. O. U. Records Committee. 1986. Official Checklist of Iowa Birds 1986 Edition. Iowa Bird Life 56:46-55.
- Janssen, R. B. 1987. Birds in Minnesota. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Johnson, Mrs. R. W. 1939. A record of the Ferruginous Rough-leg. Iowa Bird Life 9:8.
- Musgrove, J. W. et al. 1947. Shorebirds in the Spirit Lake area. Iowa Bird Life 17:17-18.
- Petersen, P. 1962. Ferruginous Hawk in western Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 32:86.
- Pierce, F. J. 1930. Birds of Buchanan County Iowa. Wilson Bull. 42:253-285.
- Schmutz, J. K., and R. W. Fyfe. 1987. Migration and mortality of Alberta Ferruginous Hawks. Condor 89:169-174.
- Spiker, C. J. 1924. Birds of Wapello County Iowa. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci. 31:419-426.
- Stephens, T. C. 1918. Bird records of the past winter, 1917-1918, in the upper Missouri valley. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci. 25:71-83.
- Stephens, T. C. 1930. Bird records of the two winters, 1920-1922, in the upper Missouri valley. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci. 37:357-366.
- Stiles, B. F. 1946. Ferruginous Rough-leg in Polk County. Iowa Bird Life 16:65.
- Stoner, D. 1920. Bird records for the season 1919-1920 in the vicinity of Iowa City. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci. 37:379-384.
- Whitney, N. R. et al. 1978. The Birds of South Dakota. Vermillion: South Dakota Ornithologists' Union.
- Wilson, B. L. 1986. Identification of Ferruginous Hawk. Iowa Bird Life 56:100-104.

RR1, Box 41, Hastings, IA 51540

RECORDS OF FERRUGINOUS HAWK IN IOWA

BARBARA L. WILSON

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) is a large buteo of the western grasslands and mountains. Its normal range is just to the west of Iowa. Although it is listed as Casual for Iowa on the most recent official list of Iowa birds (I. O. U. Records Committee 1986), the status of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa is in doubt because identification problems, which I discussed in a previous article (Wilson 1986), make evaluation of past records difficult. Here I attempt to sort out what little is known with certainty and what may be reasonably surmised from published records and documentations of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa through 1987.

For reports of Ferruginous Hawk I relied heavily on copies of published records and documentations on file with the Records Committee and a summary of those reports prepared by Tom Kent. Follow-up information was obtained on several reports. Copies of all but the most recent documentations and those published records that contained any descriptive detail were evaluated by William S. Clark, coauthor of *A Field Guide to Hawks North America* (Clark and Wheeler 1987). Reports since 1980 have been evaluated by the Records Committee. Conclusions in this article, however, are my own and may differ from those of Clark and/or the Records Committee.

Of the 45 records of Ferruginous Hawk (table), few can be considered correct with a high degree of certainty. Of eight records based on dead birds, only one specimen remains, an immature bird from Iowa County dated 21 August 1936 now at the University of Iowa (photos). Another positively identified bird was a banded immature found dead 3 miles north of Poca-hontas on 27 October 1977. The bird was banded as a nestling near Medina, North Dakota, on 27 June 1977 (Gilmer et al. 1985, Gilmer letter to James Dinsmore). No specimens or useful descriptions are available for the other dead birds.

Three sight records describing adult birds mention the reddish mantle or for other reasons seem to be correct (31 December 1954, Grundy Co.; 28 October 1973 and 26 October 1983, Page Co.). I consider 34 of the 37 sight records unacceptable. Sixteen of these lack any descriptive detail and the remaining 18 have varying amounts of description that seems insufficient for identification or inconsistent with Ferruginous Hawk. Some of these descriptions are very suggestive and perhaps correct, but not completely convincing. In fact, as shown in the table, Clark and the I. O. U. Records Committee have sometimes disagreed on how to interpret these documentations.

It is interesting to note that the accepted sight records are of adults, but the two tangible records are of immatures. I would expect that the majority of Ferruginous Hawks in Iowa would be immatures, since first-year birds fledged in North Dakota have been noted to wander during migration and in their first summer (Gilmer et al. 1985). Unfortunately, immature Ferruginous Hawks are difficult to describe in a way that is both honest and convincing. Therefore, I believe that some of the recently documented immatures may have been Ferruginous Hawks even though the records can not be considered to be beyond doubt.

The older records are not as confined seasonally. The records of dead birds are from each of the months August through December and from June. Sight records include about as many spring records as fall-winter records, and a few observations are from summer.

One might dismiss the breeding season reports as identification errors; indeed, the scraps of description available reveal a lack of knowledge needed to identify Ferruginous Hawk in the field. Nevertheless, two summer reports are hard to ignore, since they are based on specimens. Ferruginous Hawk is almost as easy to identify in the hand as it is difficult to identify in the field. Feathered tarsi are easy to recognize in the hand (photo) and exclude all other species except Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*), a species that is even less likely in summer in Iowa. The August bird is now the specimen at the University of Iowa. Dumont (1933) lists a specimen collected on 25 June 1901 from Cedar Falls and said to be at Iowa State Teachers College (now University of Northern Iowa). An old specimen now at that University lacks any data on date or place of collection (letter from Dave Conrads to the author), but may be the same bird.

The range of Ferruginous Hawk has been declining, but it still breeds locally in central and rarely in eastern South Dakota (Whitney et al. 1978). Possibly when the species was more common on the eastern edge of its range, individuals wandered into the Iowa in summer.

The status of Ferruginous Hawk in other nearby states confirms that Iowa is on the edge of the species range. The hawk is not known to breed in Minnesota, but is a regular, rare migrant in spring and fall, especially in western part of the state near its Dakota breeding range, and spring sightings are about twice as common as fall sightings there (Janssen 1987). The species breeds rarely in western Nebraska and it regularly winters there as well. Schmitz and Fyfe (1987) consider its winter range to include northern Mexico and all of the western United States south and west of the northeast corner of Nebraska, although birders resident in eastern Nebraska consider it most unusual in the eastern one-third of the state (T. Bray and B. Padelford, personal communication).

Few Ferruginous Hawks are reported east of Iowa, and probably not all are accurate. A highly respected Illinois observer considers his own reports invalid and indicates that others are open to question (Bohlen 1986), so we are not the only state that has a problem determining the frequency of this species.

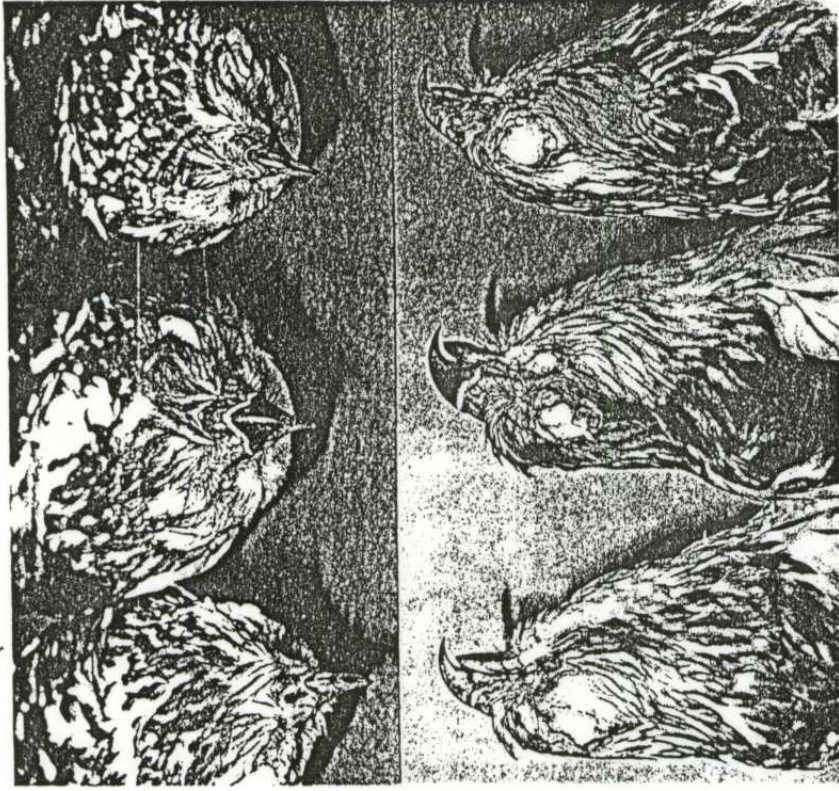
At least five records of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa appear to be substantial, and some of the others were likely correctly identified as well, but are not adequately described. Three of the five acceptable records are from the last ten years, barely enough to consider the species Casual. Iowa is just east of the known regular range of this species, so one would expect it to occur as a rare but regular migrant and perhaps winter visitor, especially in western Iowa. More information is now available in field guides on hawk identification, especially of immature birds. Careful observation and recording of details seen (and photographs!) should yield more Ferruginous Hawk records for Iowa.

Ferruginous Hawk Records for Iowa Through 1987

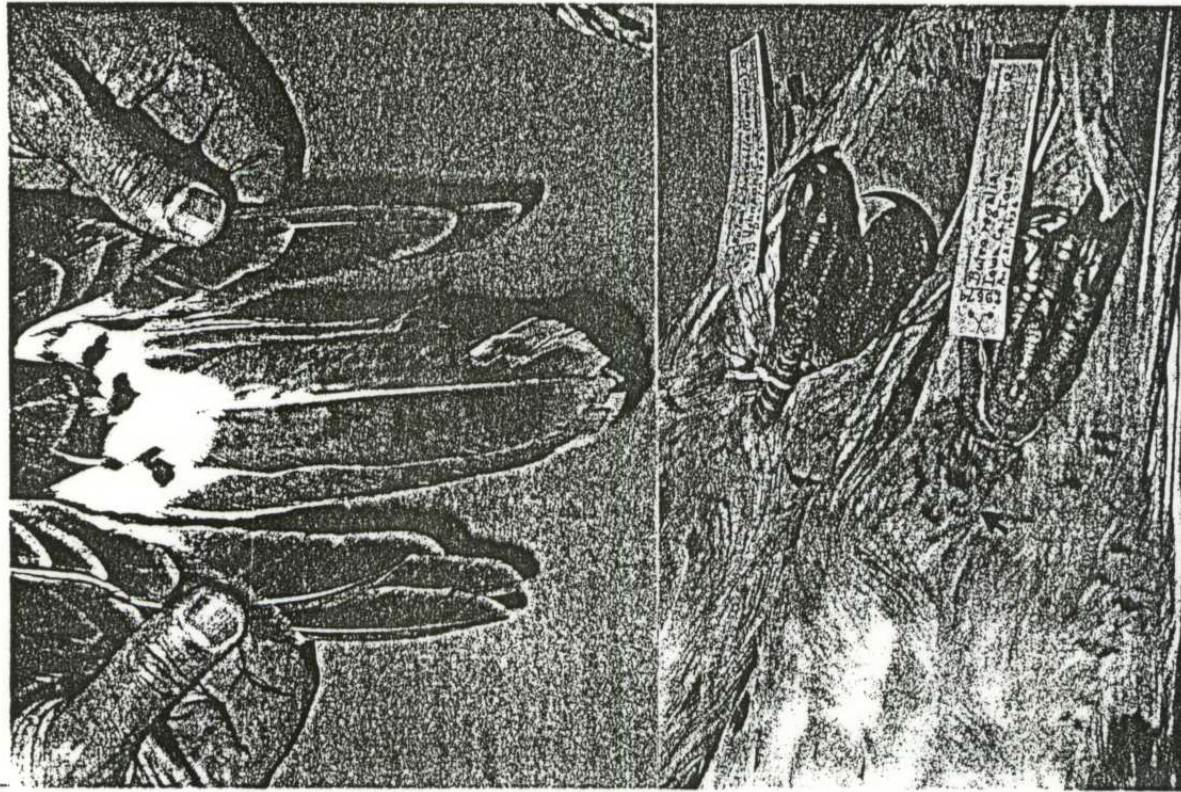
Date	County	Reference	Comment
25 Jun 1901	Black Hawk	Dumont 1933	specimen lost?
before 1907	Linn	Anderson 1907	dead bird, no detail
4 Nov 1914	Wapello	Spiker 1924	no detail
17 Sep 1917	Woodbury	Stephens 1918	mounted, no detail
2 Apr 1919	Keokuk	Dumont 1933	2, no detail
7 Dec 1919	Story	Stoner 1920	specimen, no detail
3 Oct 1921	Woodbury	Stephens 1930	mounted dark female
23 Nov 1921	Plymouth	Stephens 1930	mounted female
28 Mar 1923	Keokuk	Dumont 1933	2, no detail
17 Mar 1926	Buchanan	Pierce 1930	no detail
6 Jun 1929	Polk	Dumont 1929	2, detail, Clark-
13 Apr 1930	Buchanan	Pierce 1930	no detail
29 Mar 1934	Dallas-Ferry	Dumont 1934	2, detail, Clark-
9 Apr 1934	Dickinson	Dumont 1934	2, no detail
17 Apr 1934	Emmet	Dumont 1934	detail, Clark-
20 Mar 1936	Woodbury	Stiles 1946	no detail
21 Aug 1936	Iowa	Univ. IA specimen 29674	See photos
2 Jan 1939	Johnson	Johnson 1939	3, detail, Clark-
13 May 1946	Dickinson/Emmet	Musgrove et al. 1947	no detail
8 Sep 1946	Polk	Stiles 1946	no detail
1 Oct 1951	Fremont	Brown 1971	no detail
31 Dec 1954	Gundy	IBL 25:10	detail, Clark+
3 Nov 1962	Adair	Petersen 1962	detail, Clark-
1963	Marshall	IBL 34:10	no detail
1963	Cherokee	IBL 34:20	no detail
26 Dec 1966	Bremner	IBL 37:6	no detail
26 Dec 1970	Page	IBL 41:13	detail, Clark-
17 Dec 1972	Story	IBL 43:4	no detail
28 Oct 1973	Page	IBL 43:104	7, detail, Clark+
28 Dec 1974	Bremner	IBL 45:8	no detail
Feb 1977	Lucas	Roosa and Bartlett 1977	no detail
27 Oct 1977	Pocahontas	Gilmer et al. 1985	road kill, banded
27 Oct 1977	Page	doc, IBL 47:144	no detail, Clark-
Feb 1978	Harrison	IBL 48:70	detail, Clark-
3, 7 Feb 1979	Johnson/Iowa	doc (2), IBL 49:24	Clark-
26 Dec 1980	Fremont	doc, IBL 52:42	RC(80-27)-, Clark-
26 Oct 1983	Page	doc, IBL 54:38	RC(83-31)+, Clark+
22 Sep 1984	Marshall	doc, IBL 55:58	RC(84-24)+, Clark-
25 Oct 1984	Pocahontas	doc (2), IBL 55:58	RC(84-23)-, Clark+
23 Dec 1984	Tama	doc, IBL 55:58	RC(84-34)-
28 Mar 1985	Cherokee	doc, IBL 56:44	RC(85-03)-
29 Sep 1985	Story	doc, IBL 86:44	RC(85-16)-, Clark+
1 Feb 1986	Appanoose	doc, IBL 57:78	RC(86-06)-

IBL citations are for Field Reports, Christmas Bird Counts, Bird Banding Summaries, and Records Committee Reports in Iowa Bird Life: doc = documentation on file with Records Committee; no detail = no description of the bird; RC() = Records Committee (record number); Clark = William S. Clark; + = accepted record; - = record not accepted.

Reports since 1970 were all from fall and winter (September through February). Most were from October (5), December (5), and February (4), months when this species is expected. Of course, other hawks, including Krieger's Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis kriegeri*), also migrate through winter in Iowa during these months and may be confused with Ferruginous Hawk.



Ferruginous Hawk flanked by two Red-tailed Hawks. Compared to the Red-tailed, the Ferruginous has a large head and beak, wide gape (mouth), light cheek without malar line, and dark eye line. University of Iowa specimens. Photos by T. H. Kent.



Immature Ferruginous Hawk, Iowa Co., 21 Aug 1936. Top: banded gray tail is beginning to turn red near the white basal area. Note large black spots on white greater upper tail coverts. Bottom: feathered tarsi with dark spots (arrow) compared to Red-tailed Hawk above with unfeathered tarsi. Photos by T. H. Kent.

Re Proschelder Ferruginous Hawk:-

I called Marc Bechard of Idaho (who published with Stuart Houston an article in AB (38:166) about declining Ferruginous raptors in Saskatchewan).

He stated that 2 people had used red petagial tags on Ferruginous Hawks, both in the right wing:

① Ron Gains, Dept Zool, NDSU, Fargo 58105.

He used red tags with white lettering. Apparently Beth Proschelder has been in touch with him & he is fairly sure this is a bird banded by him in Kidder Co, ND, in 1984. Unfortunately Beth did not see any lettering on the red tag.

② R.L. Linder, Coop Unit, Dept Wildlife, SDSU, Brookings 57007

He used red tags with black lettering. Apparently he did not reply (as yet) to Beth's letter to him.

Thus the bird (a) is a Ferruginous Hawk, (b) came from either North or South Dakota. My feeling is that it would be easier to overlook black lettering on a red tag than white lettering on a red tag.

What species? Ferruginous Hawk ^(immature) How many? 1

Location? Just west of Liscomb - (Marshall County)

Type of habitat? Open country over cultivated farm fields - Iowa River $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away

When? date(s): Sept. 22, 1984 time: 9:30 to 9:32 a.m.

Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowa

others with you: Beth Proescholdt

others before or after you: none

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.

Mom and I were driving west out of Liscomb when we saw a hawk gliding low over the fields. We saw a whitish tail and thought "Marsh Hawk". But as we got a bit closer, we saw this hawk was a large butee. It had passed in front of us and over the road close to 30 yards in front of us with its wings in a slight dihedral. This was a large hawk with long wings and was very white all underneath. It had a white tail which was dark on the tip and had a brownish back and wings with light wing patches by the inner primaries. It had a red or dark orange wing tag (3" x 4" approximately) on its right upper wing. It was playing in the wind and soaring for a bit and then disappeared across the fields.

Similar species and how eliminated: Red-tailed hawks do not have definite light wing patches or "windows" on the inner primaries.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No, not after

If yes, explain: Studying different sources of information for some time.

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

Partly sunny, sun at our side; distances estimated; 7X35 Binoculars. Strong south winds

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen adult Ferruginous out west. Have seen lots of Red-tailed Hawks - immatures and adults.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Field guides of R.T. Peterson, Robbins, and Natl. Geographic. Beth Proescholdt's notes.

How long before field notes made? Right after this form completed? Nov. 26, 1984
viewing Hawk

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

What species? Ferruginous Hawk (imm.) How many? 1Location? 1/2 mile west of Liscomb, northern Marshall Co.Type of habitat? rolling fields 1/2 mile from Iowa RiverWhen? date(s): Sept. 22, 1984 time: 9:30 to 9:32 A.M.Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Mark Proescholdt

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. At first glance I thought the hawk was a Harrier as it flew toward us, swooping in low over the fields with its wings at a slight dihedral. But it was a large bateo with a long wingspread, appearing larger than a Redtail. As it came flying toward our car we saw the completely white undersides & white head, & I thought "Ferruginous" at once, although there were no rusty leggings. As it tipped we saw the dark brown top of body ^{shoulders} (no rufous showing), a white tail with a pinkish ~~tip~~ tip, & the large white "windows" on its upper wings on the inner primaries — at the ^{base} not at the wing tips. (The National Geographic guide has an illustration of exactly where the white patches were). From that guide I learned an immature doesn't have rusty leggings — & from Iowa Birds that immatures lack rufous coloring on back & shoulders. So I'm convinced it was an immature Ferruginous — & not a Redtail. It also had a red-orange tag, about 3"x4" on its right upper wing.

Similar species and how eliminated: Redtails, esp Krider's — but that was eliminated by the place the white wing patches were — on the inner primaries, not the wing tips.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? Yes —
 If yes, explain: We had reservations & read everything we could get our hands on before deciding it was an imm. Ferruginous.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: overcast day, strong S. winds, as close as 40 or 50 feet, (approx.) binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Red tails of course, 1 Krider's Red tail, a few Ferruginous but never an immature
 References and persons consulted before writing description: guides — Peterson's, Robbin's, National Geog., Iowa Birds, Eckert's guide to Minnesota
 How long before field notes made? Made at once this form completed? October 7