

Ferruginous Hawk
25 Oct 1984
east of Laurens, Pocahontas Co., IA
*J. Carlson, *R. Harms
IBL 54:111; 55:58, Wilson 1988

Record Number: 84-23
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Judith Carlson (25, 26 October)
Ronald Harms (25 October)

LETTERS

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

REFERENCES

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

VOTE: 3-III, 3-IV, 1-V

III, A puzzling pair of descriptions, key point seems to be feathered tarsus on bird that wasn't roughleg. Rufous (not clear where) and white on wings (where?) suggestive but again not clear where.

IV, Almost convincing. Lightly barred feathering on legs is best mark described. Reddish-brown patches seen by Harms are not well described as to location. White patches on back and wings described by Carlson could be a Red-tail unless specific location noted. The documentors did not see the same marks and lack experience with this species.

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, Red-tailed Hawks can be very light on belly and have light patches on upper parts of wing. Feathered tarsus could be a mistaken observation.

IV, This bird may have indeed been a Ferruginous ('looked very much like the one in Gladys Black's flight cage'; 'feathers went down to feet--no bare leg was visible') but overall the descriptions are not convincing. No detail on age of bird, position of wing patches, color pattern in flight, etc.

IV, I'd like clarification--drawings? Where was the white on the wings and back? What is meant by 'reddish-brown patches below and above the wings'? Probably a Ferruginous; eliminating the Krider's Red-tail is the challenge.

OUTSIDE REVIEW: I sent these documentations to Kim Eckert and this is his reply (tk): "Harms/Carlson record is unacceptable. The only mark they mentioned that suggests Ferruginous is 'feathering went down to feet--no bare leg was viable.' However, this was only noted while the hawk was perched on a fence post. Any and all hawks (Buteos, anyway) when perched this way may only have their feet showing and the legs will be concealed by the

belly feathers. Unless the observers can reassure me that they could see the entire leg below the body and that the feathers covering the tarsi were not belly feathers, then I'm not convinced. Also, the 'white areas on back' suggest Red-tail; Red-tails, Krider's or otherwise, normally show white markings on the back and upper wing surface."

RECORDS OF FERRUGINOUS HAWK IN IOWA

BARBARA L. WILSON

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) is a large buted 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 Pocatolas 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 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 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.

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.
 Dufkonn, P. A. 1929. [no title]. Bull. Iowa Ornithologists Union 7:23.
 Dufkonn, P. A. 1933. A Revised List of the Birds of Iowa. Iowa City: University of Iowa Studies in Natural History, Vol 15.
 Dufkonn, 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

84-23

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. Slight 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 Conrad 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. Padelord, 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.

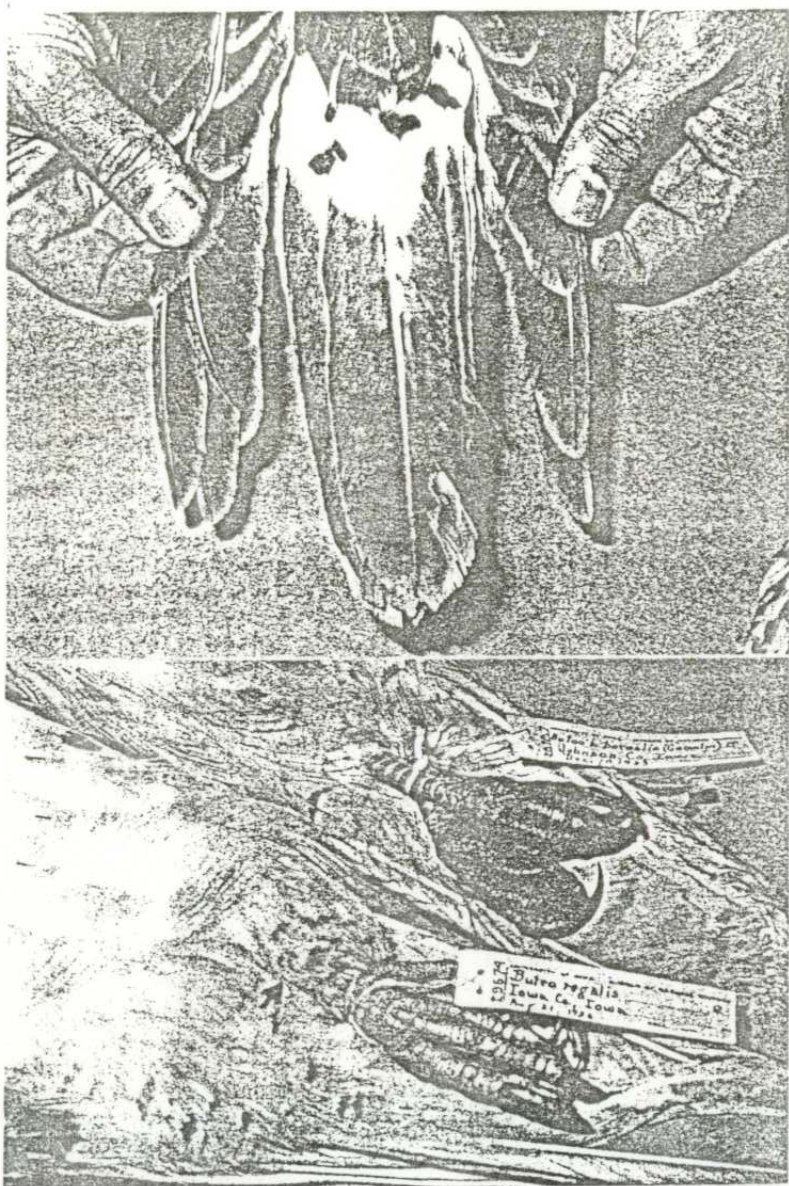
At least five records of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa appear to be substantial, and some of the others were likely correctly identified as well, but are not adequately described. Three of the five acceptable records are from the last ten years, barely enough to consider the species Casual. Iowa is just east 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.

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.

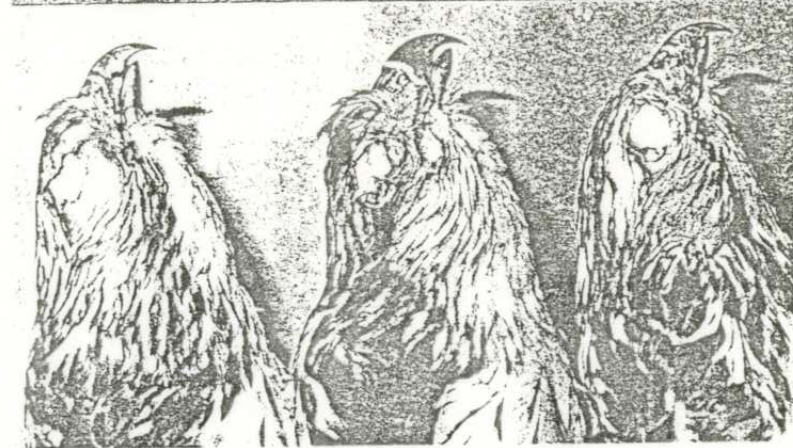
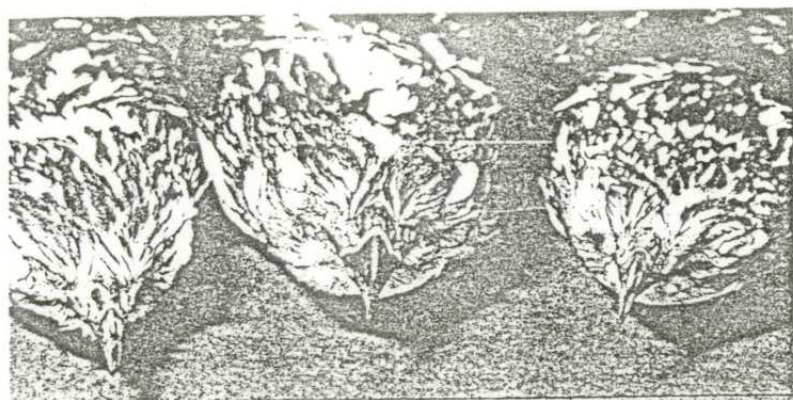
Ferruginous Hawk Records for Iowa Through 1987

Date	County	Reference	Comment
25 Jun 1901	Black Hawk	Dumont 1933	specimen lost?
before 1907	Linn	Anderson 1907	detail, Clark
4 Nov 1914	Wapello	Spiker 1924	dead bird, 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 1923	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-Perry	Dumont 1934	2, detail, Clark
29 Mar 1934	Dallas-Long Pond	Dumont 1934	2, no detail
9 Apr 1934	Dickinson	Dumont 1934	detail, Clark
11 Apr 1934	Clay	Dumont 1934	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	IBL 43:104
28 Dec 1974	Bremner	IBL 45:8	7, detail, Clark+
28 Oct 1977	Pocahontas	Gilmer et al. 1985	road kill, banded
27 Oct 1977	Page	doc, IBL 47:144	detail, Clark-
3 Feb 1978	Harrison	IBL 48:70	Clark-
3 Feb 1979	Johnson/Iowa	doc (2), IBL 49:24	RC(80-27)-, Clark-
26 Dec 1980	Fremont	doc, IBL 52:42	RC(83-31)+, Clark+
22 Sep 1984	Marshall	doc, IBL 55:58	RC(84-23)+, Clark-
25 Oct 1984	Pocahontas	doc (2), IBL 55:58	RC(84-34)-, Clark+
23 Dec 1984	Tama	doc, IBL 55:58	RC(85-03)-
28 Mar 1985	Cherokee	doc, IBL 56:44	RC(85-16)-, Clark+
29 Sep 1985	Story	doc, IBL 86:44	RC(86-06)-
1 Feb 1986	Appanoose	doc, IBL 57:78	

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.



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.



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.

What species? FERRUGINOUS Hawk IMM How many? 1

Location? 2 Miles EAST LAURENS IA on Highway 10

Type of habitat? Road Ditch Fence Line & Large FARM Grove

When? date(s): 10/25 10/26 time: 10:30 11:25
5:45 to 6:15

Who? your name and address: Judith CARLSON RR2 Box 68 LAURENS

others with you: Dr. Ronald HARMS 318 West GARFIELD LAURENS IA

others before or after you: HELEN CARLSON RR2 Box 68 LAURENS

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.

Large White Headed Hawk with DARK NARROW Eyestripe. Throat, chest and belly white. Some color on the leg - (light barring). When flying away Tail was light in color. Also white areas on back & wings. This Hawk was the size of a Red Tailed Hawk or slightly larger. In flight the Tail was longer and not fanned out like a Red tail. As Hawk flew away from us could not see under side during flight. Posture while perched on fence post was upright similar to Red Tail - But feathers went down to feet - No bare leg was visible.

Similar species and how eliminated: Red Tail are darker & stockier in appearance Osprey - smaller, darker on back and eye stripe wider shorter & longer Rough legged darker all over on front.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
1st Sighted Setting on Fence Post along Highway About 20 ft away at about 5:45 PM observed for very short period of time. Went on to AdHome & called Ron Harms. About 20 min later both of us observed bird in Grove near my first sighting for about 20-30 min - Bird flew from one tree to another while we were watching.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:
No previous experience with this species - But I'm familiar with most of the other species in the area.

References and persons consulted before writing description:
I. Con called Audubon Master Guide to Birding & A Manual for the Identification of Birds of this and Neighboring Areas

How long before field notes made? 50-45 min this form completed? 10/27

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

What species? Ferruginous Hawk How many? 1Location? Pocahontas CountyType of habitat? farm groveWhen? date(s): 10-25-84 time: 6:15^{±5} to 6:20^{±5}Who? your name and address: Ronald Harms, Laurens, Iowa 50554others with you: Judith Carlson 895-4510 (10)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.

Size of a red-tailed hawk Buteo shape
 Very white breast & belly - white extended up & included the head.
 When it flew, it had redish-brown patches below and
 above the wings (patches against white)

Similar species and how eliminated: No bands on breast or bellyDid any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Near sundown, 75+ yds, field glasses.Previous experience with species and similar ones: Looked very much like
 The one in Gladys Black's flight cage.References and persons consulted before writing description: 'Golden' and Petersons'How long before field notes made? _____ this form completed? < 1 hr.
R. V. Harms

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