

Ferruginous Hawk
1 Feb 1986
Rathbun Res., Appanoose Co., IA
*Bill Heusinkveld
IBL 57:78, Wilson 1988

Record Number: 86-06
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Bill Heusinkveld

REFERENCE

Records Committee: IBL 57:78

Wilson, B. L. 1988. Records of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa. IBL 58:95-100.

VOTE: 2-IV, 2-V, 3-VI

VI, (1) There is little evidence in the description of size and shape, "Hawk, Buteo size and shape." (2) There is a very tenuous link between this observation of perched bird and one seen a week earlier in flight and thought to be the same bird. (3) If it was the same bird, the mention of dark legs on the flying bird indicates an adult. If so, the head on this bird should be light, not dark as described. (4) The description of legs which "appeared to be feathered, but not very evident in perched position" is tentative. (5) Following is the opening sentence of the description of a Ferruginous Hawk from the National Geographic Society field guide: "Rust back and shoulders; paler head; white tail washed with pale rust." This is almost contradictory to the description in the documentation. This documentation is entirely consistent with Red-tailed Hawk.

VI, If the bird had dark leg feathers as postulated, it would be an adult Ferruginous and should have had red in tail, rufous on back and wings, white rectangular patch on upper wing, massive head and beak, and long wing profile. No mention is made of patagial stripe and lack of belly band does not exclude Red-tail. The dark head and back with white flecking suggest Red-tail.

V, This possibly could be a Ferruginous Hawk but the documentation as I read it does not rule out Red-tailed Hawk. If the observer got a good enough look at the legs to say that they appeared to be feathered, then he should also been able to see if the leggings were dark in color. Carpal bar coloration or mention of window in upper wing was not discussed, important field ID points to leave out in this species. I have seen several Red-tailed Hawks that would come surprisingly close to fitting this documentation. Where is documentation by Marj Heusinkveld and Julius Dudey?

IV, Not enough information given to eliminate red-tailed hawk. In particular, no mention of whitish dorsal wing patches and not enough description of rusty leggings to rule out shadow effect, etc. More detail on size, shape, and flight characteristics would have been helpful.

VI, I think this is a Krider's Red-tail. Eliminates Ferruginous: "dark head;" also "dark vee" can appear on pale Red-tails. No info on flight pattern, wing pattern, etc.

IV, If the bird was seen well enough to tell it probably had feathered tarsi, then the dark legs and flanks should have been

seen if it was an adult. The bird seen the week before sounds like an adult Ferruginous but can't be this same bird unless something has been left out. Color of upperside of tail is impossible to tell from underneath.

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 summarized 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 details 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, 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 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.

LITERATURE CITED

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 Wilson, B. L. 1986. Identification of Ferruginous Hawk. Iowa Bird Life 56:100-104.
 RRI, Box 41, Hastings, IA 51540

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Date	County	Reference	Comment
25 Jun 1901	Black Hawk	DuMont 1933	specimen lost?
before 1907	Lin	Anderson 1907	dead bird, no detail
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
28 Nov 1921	Plymouth	Stephens 1930	mounted female
28 Mar 1923	Keokuk	DuMont 1933	2, 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-
29 Mar 1934	Dallas-Long Pond	DuMont 1934	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 Jun 1936	Iowa	Univ. IA specimen 29674	See photos
2 Aug 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	Roosea and Bartlett 1977	no detail
Feb 1977	Lucas	Roosea and Bartlett 1977	road kill, banded
27 Oct 1977	Pocahontas	Gilmer et al. 1985	IBL 47:144
27 Oct 1977	Page	doc, IBL 47:144	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 Kritder's Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis kritleri*), also migrate through and winter in Iowa during these months and may be confused with Ferruginous Hawk.

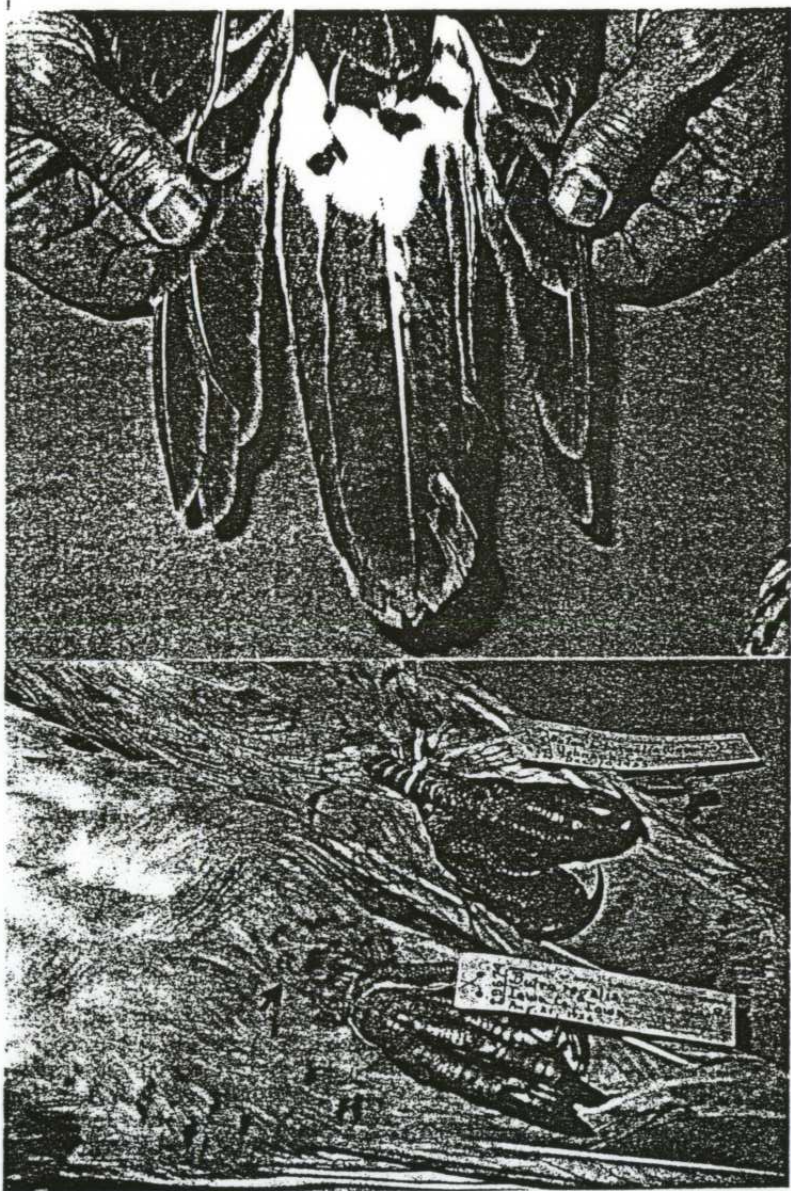
The older records are not as confined seasonally. The records of dead birds are from each of the months August through December and from June. Sight records include about as many spring records as fall-winter records, and a few observations are from summer.

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.

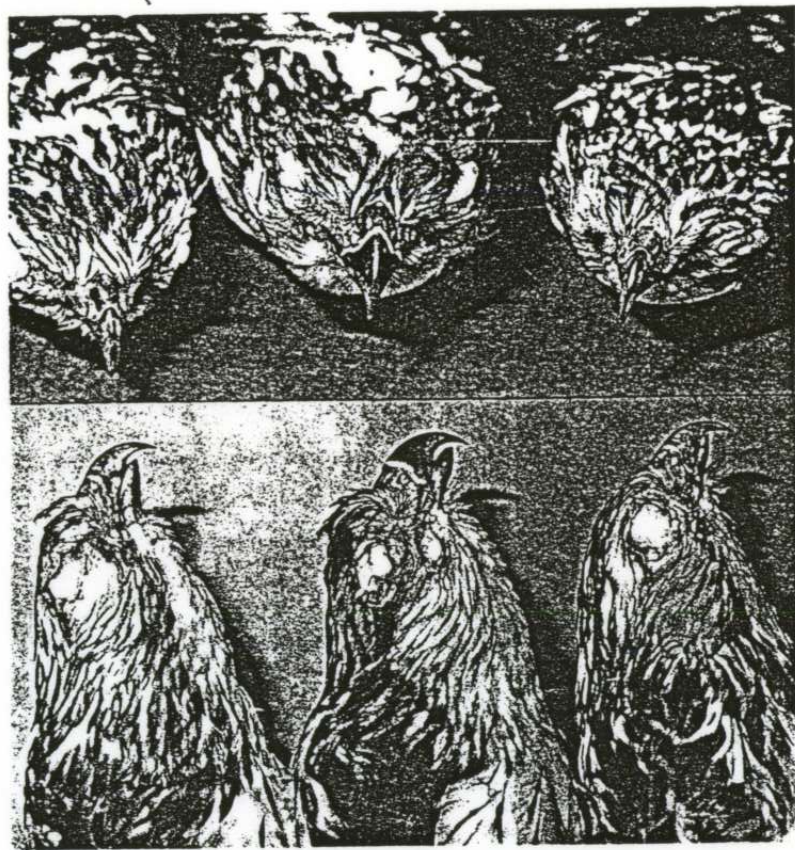
The range of Ferruginous Hawk has been declining, but it still breeds locally in central and rarely in eastern South Dakota (Whitney et al. 1978). Possibly when the species was more common on the eastern edge of its range, individuals wandered into the Iowa in summer. The status of Ferruginous Hawk in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

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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.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Ferruginous Hawk*DATE SEEN: *2-1-86*SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Rathbun Res.*OBSERVERS: *Bill Heusinkveld*DATE OF REVIEW: *4-3-87*METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote via mail*CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *VI*

COMMENTS: *Majority of committee believed that more details were needed to completely eliminate the chance of this bird being a red-tailed hawk.*

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species FERRUGINOUS HAWK
 Location ROLLING COVE AREA, RATHBUN LAKE, APPANOOSE COUNTY
 Habitat PERCHED IN LARGE TREE IN GROVE NEXT TO LAKE RATHBUN
 Date(s) FEBRUARY 1, 1986 Time 9:04 to 9:15
 Name and Address BILL HEUSINKVELD, 840 S. PARK, CENTERVILLE, IOWA 52544
 Other observers MARJ HEUSINKVELD

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 behavior and voice.

HAWK, BUTEO SIZE AND SHAPE, EXTREMELY WHITE BELLY WITH NO HINT OF A BELLY BAND, DARK HEAD WITH SOME "WHITE" FLECKING SHOWING WHEN IT TURNED ITS HEAD, TAIL WAS WHITE TO SMOKY (UNDER SIDE), BACK WAS DARK, SOME WHITE FLECKING SHOWED IN WING WHEN IT RAISED ITS WING, LEGS APPEARED TO BE FEATHERED BUT NOT VERY EVIDENT IN PERCHED POSITION.

THIS IS BELIEVED TO BE THE SAME BIRD THAT WAS SEEN BY THE SAME OBSERVERS A WEEK EARLIER WHEN IT WAS FLYING AND THERE SEEMED TO BE A SLIGHTLY PINKISH CAST TO THE TAIL WITH WHITE AT THE BASE, VERY WHITE UNDER SIDE WITH BLACK WING TIPS. MARJ GOT A GLIMPSE OF THE DARK VEE OF THE LEGS.

Similar species and how eliminated: THE BIRD WAS ALSO SEEN SEVERAL TIMES BY JULIUS TODEY WHO PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED THE DARK VEE OF THE LEGS.
 RED TAIL ELIMINATED BY COMPLETE LACK OF BELLY BAND, NO RED TAIL.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured); and optical equipment: GOOD SUNLIGHT, 1/4 MILE ESTIMATED, 20X45 SPOTTING SCOPE.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: LOTS OF EXPERIENCE WITH RED TAILS, NOT TOO MUCH WITH FERRUGINOUS. SAW THEM SOME
 References and persons consulted before writing description: OUT WEST.

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATELY. How long before this form completed? 4 HOURS