

Prairie Falcon

6 Nov 1988

n. of Marshalltown, Marshall Co., IA

*B. Proescholdt, *M. Proescholdt

IBL 59:12, 77

Record Number: 88-16

Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Beth Proescholdt

Mark Proescholdt

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:12

Records Committee: IBL 59:77

VOTE: 3-A-D, 4-NA

NA. See Hawks (Clark and Wheeler) for problems with imm. tundra race of Peregrine. Note how this form on plate 23 is nearly identical to Prairie Falcon on plate 22. This description fits either species and confirmation of presence or absence of black axillaries is necessary.

A-D. Light brown even coloring of the upperparts is diagnostic of this species.

A-D. Good description of a large, pale falcon. The "sandy-brown" upperparts, rusty tail, and lack of dark helmet or sideburns describe Prairie Falcon. Also, the date is more indicative of Prairie Falcon, rather than Peregrine.

NA. Distinction from Peregrine Falcon based on light color and lack of helmet. I don't think this is enough to separate from immature tundrius Peregrine.

A-D. Without a description of the diagnostic black axillaries I am not convinced that this might not be a light colored F. peregrinus tundrius or possibly one of the various color phases of the Gyrfalcon (who knows for sure). Coloration is fine but with such a fast and fleeting glimpse I can not say for sure that this is not something else.

A-D. This bird is regular enough not to require documentation.

NA. No indication that Gyrfalcon considered, despite several references to size and powerful appearance. Date somewhat puzzling. Probably a Prairie, but at the date seen, more consideration of other possibilities would have helped the documentation be more convincing.

SENT TO: Beth and Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, IA

What species? Prairie Falcon How many? 1Location? one-half mile north of MarshalltownType of habitat? open farmland, approaching Iowa RiverWhen? date(s): November 6, 1988 time: 10:05 to 10:06 AMWho? 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.

Going north out of Marshalltown I spotted a large falcon speeding toward us. In the strong NW winds the bird was just going with the wind, tail spread, & sailing fast. Much too large for a Kestrel or Merlin it faced us momentarily, was away at our side, then into the sun & only a silhouette as it disappeared over the treeline at the river. Twice it banked and showed a very light sandy-brown back, head & wings (much too light to be an immature Peregrine) & it had no helmet. Even though it was impossible to see black axillars the very light coloring (as we had seen on all the Prairie falcons we have seen) convinced us it had to be a Prairie falcon and not a Peregrine.

Similar species and how eliminated: Kestrel & Merlin - this bird much too large for that. Peregrine - this bird was too light colored to be a Peregrine & it had no helmet

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

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

Partly cloudy, sun behind us at first, closest distance - 30' away, 40' above us - binoculars - Nikon 8x30

Previous experience with species and similar ones: many Kestrels, several Merlins & Peregrines - a few Prairie.References and persons consulted before writing description: noneHow long before field notes made? at once this form completed? Nov. 6, 1988

What species? Prairie Falcon How many? 1Location? Just North out of Marshalltown - (Marshall County)Type of habitat? Open fields but right along the Iowa RiverWhen? date(s): Nov. 6, 1988 time: 10:05 a.m. to 10:06 a.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Beth Proescholdtothers 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.

We were just leaving Marshalltown when Mom spotted this large hawk coming toward us. It was a light sandy brown large falcon with an unmarked tail. It was a large falcon about Peregrine Falcon size. It was much too big for a ♀ Kestrel. It had no peregrine helmet or sideburns look that we could see. I'm sure we should have seen that if it was a peregrine - we've seen 8 peregrines this fall. It banked once or twice and its back, wings, and head on the topside were all light brown in color. I thought the coloration on the back was similar as that of a huge ♀ Kestrel. It was facing us momentarily and then headed away to the S.E. East. I had a brief glimpse at the undersides, but it was just a dark blur then. It was off to our side for a bit and then we had only a silhouette as it went away from us. We chased after it but never saw it again. Its tail was spread in the wind as it soared and the underside of the tail looked rustyish like the underside of an adult Redtailed Hawk tail, the tail was unbarred, we didn't see it flap its wings once but just soared in the strong NW. winds of 25-30 mph. Second day in a row for fierce NW winds

Similar species and how eliminated:

An immature Peregrine Falcon is a much darker brown coloration on the back, head, and wings and would have a distinctive helmet or sideburns look.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain: I wish I could have seen it for just a bit more when it whizzed by us up close.

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

Sunny day. Sun behind us and then to our sides. Good viewing. Distances estimated - 50 yards away at first, 40 feet overhead, 30 feet away at the closest, ended up around 1/4 mile away at the end. 8x30 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen Prairie Falcons out west and many Peregrines by now.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Field Guides - R.T. Peterson, Robbins, Natl. Geog., Audubon Master Guide. Hawks in Flight.

How long before field notes made? Right away this form completed? Nov. 6, 1988
and some more 2 1/2 hours later.

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