

Ferruginous Hawk

Record Number: 97-01

12 Feb 1997

Classification: A-D

nw of Thornton, Cerro Gordo Co., IA

\*Fisher,\*Kent,\*J. Fuller, \*J&\*S Dinsmore

Kent 1998; P-0558, IBL 67:60, 68:85, Fischer 1998

DOCUMENTATIONS

Carolyn Fisher (12 Feb), 48 Lakeview Ct., Mason City [6/15/97]

Thomas H. Kent (14 Feb), 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246

Jim Fuller (16 Feb), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

Jim Dinsmore (16 Feb), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014

Stephen J. Dinsmore, (16 Feb), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014

PHOTOGRAPH

Reid Allen, 15 Feb, P-0558 (IBL 68:23)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:60

Records Committee: IBL 68:85

Fischer, C. J. 1998. Ferruginous Hawk in Cerro Gordo County.

IBL 68:22-23.

Kent, T. H. 1998. Additional comments on immature Ferruginous Hawk in Cerro Gordo County. IBL 68:23-24.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, White underparts, comma on underwing, shape and position of windows on upperwing, long wings, and behavior are all conclusive.

A-D, The documentations complement each other and provide all the field marks for immature Ferruginous Hawk.

A-D, Careful descriptions mostly by skeptical (at first) observers. Key field marks noted (except for fully feathered tarsus).

RE-VOTE (by mail with photo, May 1998): 4 A-P, 1 A-D, 2 no vote



Ferruginous Hawk  
Cerro Gordo, IA  
15 Feb 1997 Reid Allen 97-01

R0558

97-01

71+00 NNNNN --9RU 2061



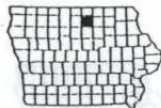
the bird intermittently over the next two hours, feeding alone or near Baltimore Orioles and American Goldfinches. I saw a yellow bird with a red head and black wings, mantle and tail. In size it was between that of a Baltimore Oriole and an American Goldfinch, closer to that of the goldfinch. The bird was bright red on the face, throat, and crown; the red was less bright on the nape. The eye was black with a fine yellow eye ring. The wings were black with two bars; the upper bar broader and yellow, the lower bar thinner and a more pale yellow (almost white). The bird was frequently observed in our neighborhood over the next six days, last seen the morning of 13 May. It fed on oranges garnished with marmalade at the home of Lucy Rimler. Numerous birders from as throughout the state enjoyed her hospitality as well. This is the first recorded observation of a Western Tanager in Story County and about the twelfth for Iowa.

2427 Waterford Drive, Ames IA 50010

### FERRUGINOUS HAWK IN CERRO GORDO COUNTY

CAROLYN J. FISCHER

On 12 February 1997 at 2:30 p.m. I was driving south along Dogwood Avenue in southwestern Cerro Gordo County. Tim Phalen, Jan Walter, and I were looking for a Snowy Owl that had been recently sighted in that section of the county. The terrain is rolling hills covered with open farm fields.



From the left side of the car, a large buteo flew rather low and parallel to me car. The wings were long, straight edged, and appeared pointed. The back was very dark, the tail was white at the base, and was not fanned out. The underside was very white and patagial marks were absent from the leading edge of the wings. The bird flew with strong wing beats.

The bird landed in a field on a 5-foot fence post approximately 45 yards from us. Using my window mount spotting scope and having a side view of the bird, I made the following observations:

Large head and bill. Head was light but not all white. Throat was white, without a malar stripe. Dark line through the eye, with a light area above and below the eye. Crown was brown with some streaking. Breast very white, no belly band, white leg feathers, unable to see the feet. Had some brown-black spots on the flanks. Back dark brown and the wing tips were just short of the tail tip. With bird perched, the tail looked dark except a slight rufous wash at the tip.

We watched, using a 30x spotting scope, for 30 minutes in good sunny viewing conditions. Referring to Clark and Wheeler (1987), I was able to eliminate light-morph Red-tailed Hawk by lack of a prominent eye line, white cheek, and absence of malar stripe. We concluded that we were watching an immature Ferruginous Hawk. After returning home I consulted Dunne et al. (1988) for further confirmation. The Iowa Bird Line was notified of the sighting. The hawk was seen in the area by others for the next several days.

There had been only five accepted records of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa. This is the first accepted record of the Ferruginous Hawk in Cerro Gordo County (Kent and Dinsmore, 1996).

### LITERATURE CITED

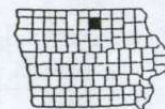
Clark, W. S., and B. K. Wheeler. 1987. *A Field Guide to Hawks of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.  
Dunne, P., D. Sibley, and C. Sutton. 1988. *Hawks in Flight*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.  
Kent, T. H., and J. J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Privately published, Iowa City.

48 Lakeview Court, Mason City, IA 50401

### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON IMMATURE FERRUGINOUS HAWK IN CERRO GORDO COUNTY

THOMAS H. KENT

This bird was initially reported to the Birdline by Lowell Washburn and later seen by many other observers. Documentations were available from 14 February by Tom Kent and from 16 February by Jim Fuller, Jim Dinsmore, and Steve Dinsmore. A photograph was taken on 15 February by Reid Allen. On the 14th and 16th the bird was seen at close range roosting in confers at a farmstead at 140th Street and Dogwood Avenue. It was also seen flying.



Additional observations noted by these observers on the sitting bird included a large yellow cere; a large, heavy, thick bill with long hook; a prominent yellow gape extending to below the eye; pale gray eye; blue-gray bill; yellow feet; long, white streak on upper back with some rufous feather edgings on scapulars; dark spots on the sides of the breast beneath the wing; and small black dots on white feathered legs. In flight, observations included a big-chested, long-winged profile with pointed wing tips; white under wing except for dark comma at wrist; triangular white patches at the bases of the primaries on the upper wing; distal tail grayish; and white leg feathers.

Immature Ferruginous Hawks are difficult to identify, requiring good views of several subtle field marks. The combination of features reported by five birders aided in the identification of this bird—no one observer was able to detect all the field marks because of the position or behavior of the bird. Field marks that were not reported include the U-shaped row of dots on the upper tail coverts and dihedral wing pattern in flight. Single observers noted slight rufous wash to the tip of the tail and slight rufous in the scapulars.



Fig. 1. Immature Ferruginous Hawk, Cerro Gordo County, 15 February 1997. Photo by Reid I. Allen.

Some of the more specific features of Ferruginous Hawk (Clark and Wheeler 1987, Dunne et al. 1988, Wheeler and Clark 1995) include large head and gape; white cheek, dark eye-line, and absence of malar stripe; white underwing without patagial mark; feathered legs (shared with Rough-legged Hawk); and white patch in base of primaries (shared with juvenile Rough-legged Hawk). U-shaped dots on the upper tail



✓  
coverts are typical of juvenile light-morph Ferruginous Hawk. A close view or view from a favorable angle is needed to confirm many of these field marks. The large size and long narrow wings typical of Ferruginous Hawk are useful to the experienced observer.

#### LITERATURE CITED

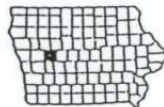
- Clark, W. S., and B. K. Wheeler. 1987. *A Field Guide to Hawks of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Dunne, P., D. Sibley, and C. Sutton. 1988. *Hawks in Flight*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Kent, T. H., and J. J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Privately published, Iowa City.
- Wheeler, B. K., and W. S. Clark. 1995. *A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors*. Academic Press, London.

211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52246

#### BRANT IN CARROLL COUNTY

RUSS BEHRENS

On 29 November 1996, while viewing a large flock of Canada Geese at Swan Lake State Park in Carroll County, I noticed one bird perched on the ice that was quite different from the 1,500-2,000 Canada Geese that were present. Those geese were mostly intermediate-sized Canada Geese, smaller than the "Giant" Canada Geese that typically nest in Iowa. This bird was somewhat smaller than the other geese, about the size of the much smaller "Hutchins" subspecies of Canada Goose that migrates through Iowa. The bird was obviously some type of waterfowl but stayed away from the rest of the waterfowl that were present. The most obvious difference was its coloration. Its head, neck, and chest were all very dark, almost black, in color. There was a white ring around the neck, noticeable but not so pronounced as in a Canada Goose. The sides of the body were also dark colored but had some white bands or stripes on them. The rear of the body was pure white. Besides being smaller than the Canada Geese that were present, the bird's bill was shorter and blunter and the neck was also shorter in proportion to its body. In shape, it looked very much like a "Hutchins" Goose. Based on the bird's coloration, size, and shape, I identified it as a Brant, most likely of the western *nigricans* subspecies. Several other people who were with me also saw the bird and agreed that it was different from the Canada Geese. I talked to people at the park, and they told me that it was not a domestic bird that had been released at the park. There are four other reports of Brant from Iowa, all of them reported in fall (Kent and Dinsmore, *Birds in Iowa*, 1996).



907 East 10th Street, Spencer, IA 51301

97-01

#### WHITE-WINGED DOVE AT LE GRAND IN MARSHALL COUNTY

MARK PROESCHOLDT

On 28 April 1997, I was at the high school parking lot in Le Grand. As I got out of my van, I heard the loud, distinctive call of a White-winged Dove. It was the loud "who cooks for you" call that I have heard and enjoyed on a number of trips to southeastern Arizona. I walked to the yard next to the parking lot and saw a White-winged Dove fly from one tree to another. In my initial look at it, it looked much like a Mourning Dove with bright white wing patches.

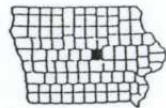


Fig 1. White-winged Dove at Le Grand, Marshall County, 28 April, 1997. Photo by Thomas H. Kent.



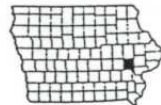
On 1 May 1997, I saw it perched on wires by a church near the school and saw the white slash on its wings. On 10 May I heard it calling and saw it flying around some. At that time, I first saw the white in its tail and the squared-off end of the tail. Many people saw this bird, and it stayed at least through 17 May. This is the second state record of a White-winged Dove following the first sighting on a White-winged Dove by Nelson Hoskins of Ottumwa on 8-14 April 1997 at his feeder during a snow storm.

Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

#### IMMATURE WHITE IBIS AT CORALVILLE RESERVOIR

THOMAS H. KENT

An immature White Ibis was found at Half-moon Lake on Greencastle Avenue in the Hawkeye Wildlife Area of the Coralville Reservoir in Johnson County on the afternoon of 5 September 1995 by James Huntington. James immediately notified many local birders who saw the bird that evening, and the word was spread so that many birders were able to see the ibis on their way to or from the I.O.U. meeting in Davenport the next weekend.



The bird was obviously an ibis with long legs and neck, and thick, down-turned bill. The upper parts were brown and the belly, under rump, and upper thighs white. The gray of the belly extended up around the leading edge of the wing. On the left side of the folded wing (but not on the right) there was a conspicuous white spot. The head, neck, and upper breast were streaked brown. The soft brown of the face was



DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

97-01

What species? Immature Ferruginous Hawk How many? 1

Location? S.W. Cerro Gordo Co. N.W. of Thornton

Type of Habitat? open country

When? date(s): February 12, 1997 time: 2:30 to 3:20

Who? your name and address: Carolyn Fischer, 48 Lakeview Ct.

Others with you: Jan Walter, Tim Phalen Mason City

Others before or after you: Lowell Washburn (Iowa D.N.R.)

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.

While driving along a county road, a very large buteo came into my view from the (L) side of my car. It was flying rather low which made it easy for me to drive + follow - the wings were long straight-edged + appeared rather pointed. From the top side it was very dark, underside looked very white + I could not see any patagial marks. The tail was white at the base + closed. My thoughts in watching him fly ahead of me, was this hawk is too big for a red-tail, I did not have a good enough view of his

Similar species; how eliminated:

- Krider's Hawk - face wasn't all white + back wasn't heavily spotted. Also larger -
- Red-Tailed Hawk - could not see dark patagial marks. Wingtips were ~~not~~ long, ~~enough~~ Tail was not red -

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.  
good light, about 80 yards - 8x30 binoculars + Kowa 30X Spotting scope -

Previous experience with species and similar ones:-  
Saw a Ferruginous adult in 9/25 North of Ventura, Ia - also last winter in New Mexico

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Jan Walter, Pat Hawsen

How long before field notes made? same day this form completed? next day

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



underwings to safely comment whether there were black commas at wrist of each wing. Flight seemed strong wingbeats. He landed on a fence post about 5 Ft. off the ground, into a field from which I was approximately 80 yards from using my window mount spotting scope I had a side view of the hawk, large head + bill - head was light but not all white, white area under chin + without a malar stripe. Dark line through the eye, with a light area above + below the eye. Top of head was brown with some streaking, Breast looked very white, no belly band present, white leg feathers, but couldn't see feet. Did appear to have some brown-black spots on the white uppertail coverts. The back of the hawk was a rich-dark brown. no mottling - Noticed the wingtips were just short of the tail tip. what I could see of his tail looked dark except just a slight rufous wash at the tip.

Watched for 25 min. with good light - when on the post hawk's belly feathers covered most of his leg feathers -



## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

**Species:** Ferruginous Hawk; **Number:** 1 imm.

**Location:** northwest of Thornton, Cerro Gordo Co., Iowa

**Date:** 14 February 1997; **Time:** 10:00 to 10:15 a.m.

**Name and address:** Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

**Others before/with/after:** reported to birdline several weeks ago and at this location 2 days ago by Carolyn Fisher.

**Habitat and circumstances:** Open farming area on Des Moines Lobe with rolling moraines in this area and scattered farmsteads. I stayed overnight at Clear Lake and began looking for this bird at about 6:45 a.m. It had been reported at 140th St. and Dogwood, where there is a single farmstead in a low-lying area. I had driven by this area many times during the morning without seeing the bird.

**Description of bird:** As I was approaching from the west, I saw a hawk and some crows. The hawk lit on top of some sawed-off conifers that were below the power line. I could see that it was a large hawk (red-tail size or larger) and was white below. As I slowly moved up it moved to larger conifers, but was mostly concealed. Finally it moved to a favorable position, and I drove past and returned so as to be able to use my telescope from the car window. The underparts including under the tail were all white except for a few large brown spots on the sides. The wings and back were rather uniform brown. The head appeared larger than that of a red-tail. The bill was huge—heavy and thick with a long hook extended at least 0.5 cm. below the lower mandible. The cere was large and yellow. The mouth was quite evident and lined by thin yellow “lips”. There was a broad dark band extending from the bill and including the area above, below, and behind the eye. Below this the face was white. There was also a poorly-defined, broad, streaked, whitish lateral crown stripe. The top of the crown was darker brown. There was no malar stripe. The iris and feet were yellow. I could not see the legs due to some branches and the squat position of the bird. Eventually, the bird flew and revealed all white to the underwing except for a dark comma at the wrist. I did not see the upper parts until the bird had flown several hundred yards, but then, with the wings fully spread, I saw that there were prominent white patches on the upper wing surface due to white at the base of the primaries. This patch appeared as a narrow triangle with base parallel with the inner primary and pointing to the tip of the wing. It did not have the anterior-posterior orientation that is sometimes seen on red-tails. The rest of the upper wing appeared dark. There was white at the base of the tail when the bird was flying away, but I did not see the upper tail detail (color, texture). I was unable to see the legs well enough to tell whether they were feathered. I wasn't able to judge the wing shape.

**Similar species:** At close range through a telescope I noted the large, thick bill and yellow gape, which were unlike any red-tail that I had ever seen. Clark and Wheeler emphasize the white cheek, dark eye line, and absence of malar stripe, features that were quite evident on this bird. The white underwing and character of the white patches in the upper wing were confirming observations. The other features also fit an immature light morph Ferruginous Hawk. I would like to have been able to see the wing shape, and I wish I had noted the length of the wing vs. tail on the sitting bird.

**Light:** Hazy clouds. I was looking south. Lighting on the perched bird was satisfactory due to the density of the tree and closeness. **Distance:** 30 yards (perched); **Optics:** 10x binocular, 20x scope.

**Previous experience:** I have seen this species in Colorado and North Dakota. I have also examined specimens and evaluated all of the previous Iowa records.

**References before/after viewing:** I glanced briefly at the National Geographic Guide while viewing the bird (not very helpful). I consulted Clark and Wheeler (1987) and Wheeler and Clark (1995) after completing the description above.

**Time of notes:** Dictated notes during and after viewing; **Final typing:** 7 hours.



## DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

**SPECIES:** Ferruginous Hawk (Immature)

**LOCATION:** Evergreen tree at 140th Street and Dogwood Avenue, northwest of Thornton (Cerro Gordo County)

**DATE & TIME:** 16 February, 1997 (4:15-4:45 PM)

**OBSERVER:** Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

**OTHERS:** Reported by Lowell Washburn, and seen by MOB before and after. With me were ten IOU members returning from a field trip to Duluth; D. Tetrault, H. & D. Fye, D. Porter, G. Foster, C. Caster, M. & D. Overton, R. Muilenburg, G. White.

**DESCRIPTION:** The bird was perched about two-thirds of the way up in a hundred foot high evergreen tree, about 25 yards from the road. It was a very large hawk, with a relatively large head and bill. It was overall a brownish gray color on the back and wings, and a gray tail. The wings seemed to be quite long, as the primary tips were very close to the end of the tail. The large head had some distinct features, with a dark and wide eye stripe, a prominent yellow gape, a bright yellow cere, and blue-gray bill. The color of the eye was silver-gray. The cheek was white and lacked a malar stripe. The top of the head and nape were streaked brownish-gray. There was a long white streak on either side of the upper back, and just beneath it the scapulars had rufous feather edgings. The underparts were very white, except for dark spotty areas on the sides of the breast beneath the wing. The legs were entirely feathered in white, with small black dots. The uppertail was gray with a terminal area that was lighter. I could not see the undertail, and since I never saw the bird fly, could not evaluate the underwing in flight, nor the wing angle.

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** Light-morph Red-tailed Hawk is the bird with which this bird would be most likely confused. But that bird does not have a prominent eyeline or gape, and white cheek, and usually has a malar stripe. The primary extension is considerably less than the tail length in Red-tail.

**PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:** I have seen adult Ferruginous Hawks in the west.

**VIEWING CONDITIONS & OPTICS:** It was late afternoon on a mostly cloudy day. The bird was viewed through Swarovski (20 X 60) and KOWA TSN4 (20 X 60) telescopes at distances ranging from 100-300 feet looking southeast and south.

**FIELD NOTES & REFERENCES:** Field notes were made after returning home late that evening, and the Clark & Wheeler guide and National Geographic guide were viewed later.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

**Species** Ferruginous Hawk **How many?** one  
**Location?** Cerro Gordo County, west of Thornton  
**Type of habitat?** perched in pine tree in farm yard, much open  
 grassland nearby  
**When? date(s):** 16 February 1997 **Time:** 4:30-5:15 p.m.  
**Who?** your name and address Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive  
 Ames  
**Others with you** Stephen Dinsmore  
**Others before or after you** A cast of hundreds

**Describe the bird(s)**

A large buteo; my first impression was that it was Red-tailed size but in flight, it appeared fairly long winged with a pointy aspect to wings. Basically brown on back and light on underside. The underside appeared all white except for what appeared to be a faint brown belly band which was not complete across the breast. There was a distinct dark band through the eye. In flight the underside of body and wings appeared virtually all white. On the top of the wings, there was a definite white patch near the base of the outer primaries.

**Similar species and how eliminated:**

**Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?**  
 If yes, explain: no disagreement

**Viewing conditions:** lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: reasonable light. Bird perched about 40 yards away, viewed from both front and back, also seen briefly in flight

**Previous experience** with this species and similar ones: have seen species in North Dakota and Montana

**References and persons consulted before writing description:**  
 looked at National Geographic field guide while watching bird.

**How long before field notes made?**  
 this form completed? This description written next morning.  
 Numerous field marks carefully looked at in field.



97-01

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Ferruginous Hawk

Number: 1 immature

Location: 4 mi nw of Thornton, Cerro Gordo Co., IA

Habitat: farmland in open country

Date: 16 February 1997

Time: 4:35-5:10 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: James J. Dinsmore, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): We were driving roads in SW Cerro Gordo County, looking for a Snowy Owl, when we met several birders looking at a buteo perched in a pine tree at a rural farmstead. Although the bird was very close, it was facing away from us and the tail and wingtips were obscured by branches. Other birders had concluded the bird was a Ferruginous Hawk before we arrived. The bird was clearly a buteo by general shape. The bird did not appear overly large (I would have said it was Red-tail size). The head was light-colored with a darker eyeline, although from some viewing angles the head looked darker. The bill was large, but not massive. The cere and gape were yellow. The gape was very pronounced and extended to below the eye. Others present indicated this was an important field mark for Ferruginous, but neither of us had any prior experience with this mark. The eye was pale gray and the iris was dark. The visible portions of the mantle and upperwings were dark brown with a few smaller white patches on the mantle. Based on these initial views, I would not have concluded the bird was a Ferruginous Hawk.

Other birders soon left and we decided to move to the opposite side of the bird to view the underparts. We were able to study the bird for less than a minute before the bird was flushed by the property owners. Underneath, the bird was clean white except for a few brown flecks on the flanks. The bird was hunkered down in the wind, so I was not able to study the tarsi closely. In flight, the bird displayed the classic shape of a Ferruginous Hawk- big-chested, long wings, and pointed wingtips. The underwings were clean white with a dark comma at the wrist. There was no black patagial mark. I didn't see the uppertail pattern well, but I could see that there was some white on the rump and the distal portion of the tail was grayish. On the upperwings, there was a large but indistinct pale area covering most of the visible portion of the primaries, but the tips of the primaries were dark. This pale area more closely matched that of an adult Ferruginous (especially bird A on p. 49 of Dunne et al.). The leg feathering was white.

Similar species and how eliminated: Among the buteos, the only species I considered were Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks. Rough-legged Hawk (several of which were seen nearby) is smaller, has more patterned underparts, has a larger black wristmark on the underwing, and the pale upperwing patch is shaped differently. Red-tailed Hawk was eliminated by the clean white underparts, longer gape, head pattern, tail pattern, and shape of the patch on the upperwing.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good with overcast skies. Estimated viewing distance was 25m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

97-01

Previous experience with species: I have seen numerous Ferruginous Hawks in several western states, although my experience with immatures is minimal.

References consulted:

NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

Dunne et al. Hawks in flight

Clark and Wheeler Hawks

How long before field notes made: written 2 hours after observation

How long before this form completed: written 22 February 1997