

Ferruginous Hawk
26 Oct 1983
east of Shenandoah, Page Co., IA
*Jean Braley fide *R. Phipps
IBL 53:99; 54:38

Record Number: 83-31
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Jean Braley as told to Ruth Phipps

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 53:99

Records Committee: IBL 54:38

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

VOTE: 5-III, 2-IV

IV, Right place for this bird but description too brief and hawks too polymorphic to be sure on this identification.

III, critical details given, albeit secondhand.

IV, probably correct identification but details sketchy.

III, Second hand report? Familiarity with species and closeness of observation adds credibility to record, though the lack of details and channel by which the record arrived are weaknesses.

III, Well seen at close range at right time of year by sharp observers. Perhaps not the greatest description, but observer reliable, and species expected in W. Iowa. Most E. Nebraska records are in November and February.

III, Seems to have the necessary information.

REVOTE (by mail): 6-III, 1-IV

III, Would like to have Braley confirm description. Rufous back and legs diagnostic.

IV, I could be argued into giving it a III. This bird is tricky as it can look like some redtails, they should have taken a better look and/or wrote a better description and flushed bird to look at wing pattern.

III, I talked to Jean Braley--will report at meeting.

III, The right details are present, but other than that it is an overly skimpy description.

AT MEETING Ross Silcock reported that the original description was written by Jean Braley and rest of form filled in by Ruth Phipps.

LITERATURE CITED

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- Spiker, C. J. 1924. Birds of Wapello County Iowa. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci. 31:419-426.
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- 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.
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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.

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 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-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	Grundy	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	Bremer	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	Bremer	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	
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 Krider's Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamacensis krideri*), 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.

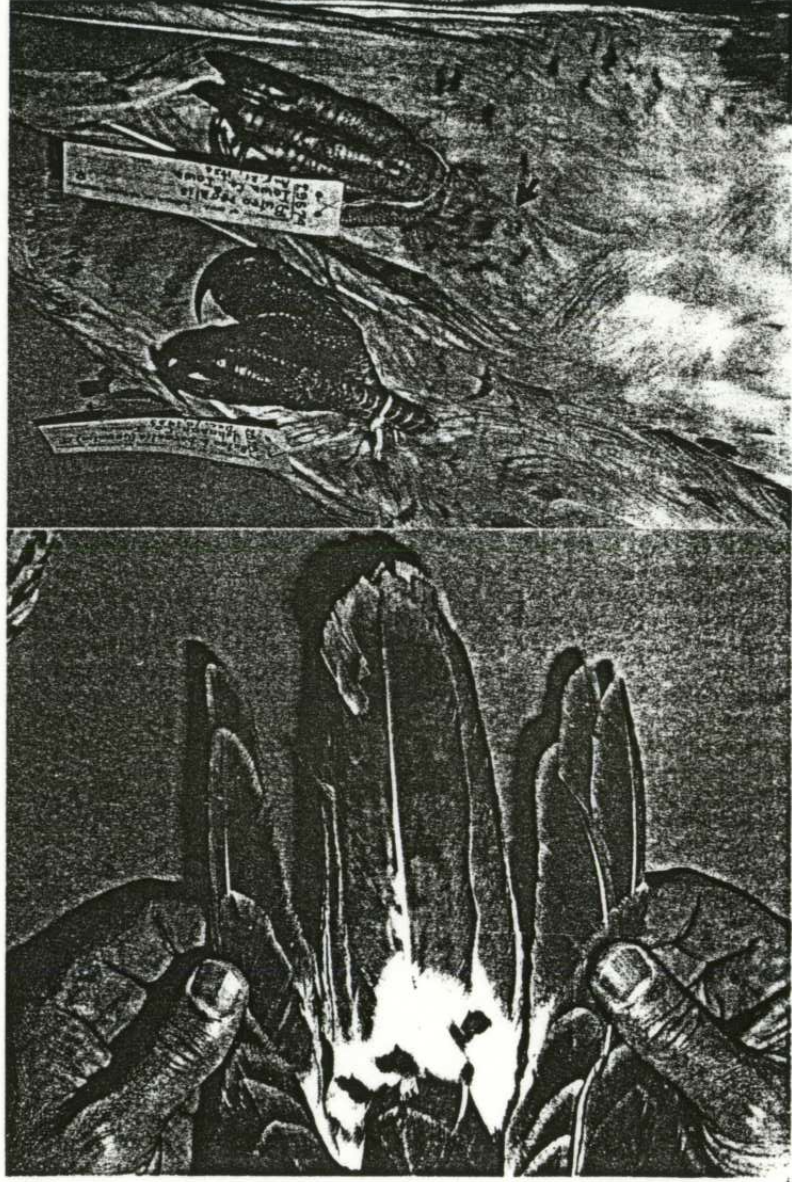
The status of Ferruginous Hawk in other nearby states confirms that Iowa is on the edge of the species range. The hawk is not known to breed in Minnesota, but is a regular, rare migrant in spring and fall, especially in western part of the state near its Dakota breeding range, and spring sightings are 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 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.

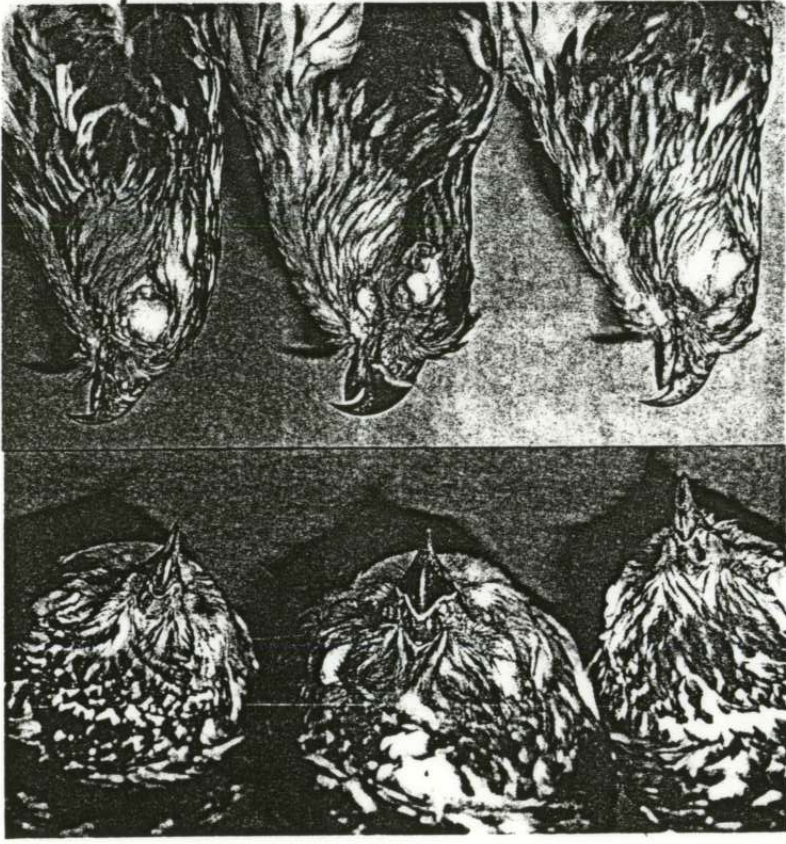
At least five records of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa appear to be substantiated, and some of the others were likely correctly identified as well, but are not adequately described. Three of the five acceptable records are from the last ten years, barely enough to consider the species Casual. Iowa is just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

83-31

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 larva with dark spots (arrow) compared to Red-tailed Hawk above with unfeathered larva. 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: Oct 26, 1983

SITE OF OBSERVATION: east of Shenandoah in Page County

OBSERVERS: Jean and Frances Braley

DATE OF REVIEW: 1983-84

METHOD OF REVIEW: Circulation to Committee; discussion at meeting.

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: III

COMMENTS:

The main problem the Committee had was the feeling that the details given were too sketchy. However it was finally agreed that an adult Ferruginous Hawk can be identified on the basis of a very few critical field marks, all of which were described in the documentation.

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.

WHAT SPECIES? *TERRUCINUS HAWK* HOW MANY: 1
E. OF SHENANDOAH ON HIGHWAY # 2
ROADSIDE - SHOULDER

83-31
III

When? date(s): 10-26-83 time: _____ to _____

Who? your name and address: JEAN BRALEY

others with you: FRANCIS BRALEY

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.

He was a well marked mature bird sitting on the shoulder of the road. It was eating ^{a rabbit} and very reluctant to move, so was seen at close range. It had a rufous back, dark rufous feathers on legs, unbanded tail, light head and breast.

FROM THE DESK OF

RUTH PHIPPS

I am sending the
file & jotted down as
Jean told them to me.
She and Karl left for
Yuma soon after this
afternoon.

They are both familiar
with this hawk having
seen many in western
Spain + the west.

Sincerely
Ruth Phipps

Similar s

Did any of

If yes,

Viewing conditions

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? 10-26-83 this form completed? 11-29-83

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