

R. V. Harms  
Laurens, IA 50554

11/29/85

Cogm

Dear Ron,

I apologize for my rather cryptic note about the Swainson's Thrush. I looked in Iowa Birds and saw that the date was a record late one and thought about the times I had had difficulty in telling a Swainson's from a Hermit Thrush. So I dashed a note off to you, with out explaining this, in hopes of getting a reply before the field reports were written up.

I think it is reasonable to say that Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes may be difficult to tell apart, especially when out of season. I can also say that I would ask Pete Petersen or Roger Tory Peterson to provide the same evidence for an out-of-season bird. Perhaps I have an advantage of knowing the dates of migration and likelihood of a bird being rare at a given date, although I have had the experience of finding out later that a bird was out of date and wishing I had taken notes. I'm sure that this can happen with banding too. I had hoped that you photographed the bird in hand.

At any rate, my request for further data should not be taken as any reflection on your ability. I do the same for any bird that is accidental or distinctly out of season. I think this is the only way we can get really good data on Iowa birds.

You indicate that you are somewhat frustrated in sending in reports. It would be helpful to know specifically what you refer to.

If you are thinking of the Ferruginous Hawk record, all I can say is "Welcome to the crowd." We aren't sure of any of the Ferruginous Hawk records. Mine got turned down too, even though I had convinced myself that it was a good record. Barb Wilson made an excellent presentation on this species at the spring IOU meeting and will be writing it up for IBL. Minnesota turns down more records of Ferruginous Hawk than any other species. Barb has examined the literature, looked at skins and photos, and is consulting experts in order to come up with a clear picture of what we should look for and observe in order to identify this species.

Another record worthy of note is the swan that you called me about this spring (I hope my memory is correct). Marion Brewer was the only one to document this bird and his description along with his photos allowed the records committee to identify this bird as an immature Tundra Swan (I had called it a Trumpeter too). From my standpoint, the purpose of the review process is not only to substantiate the facts of an observation for future workers, but also to learn more about identification. I try to keep my ego suppressed when someone disagrees with me or points out that I could have made some additional observations on a bird.

Anyway, let me know more about your concerns.

With best regards,