

3 October 1986

T.H. Kent
211 Richards St.
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Dear Mr. Kent,

On Saturday, 27 September 1986, Field Biologist, Kevin Loftus, and myself held a raptor migration watch at War Eagle Park in Sioux City, Iowa. The park overlooks the junction of the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers (R-48W, T-89N, Woodbury County). It also overlooks the junction of Interstate 29 and the Highway 12 offramp. The observation point selected was War Eagle's Monument by which access is gained off West 4th Street in Sioux City.

The monument was chosen as a raptor migration observation lookout by both Mr. Loftus and myself after much discussion and research of raptor migrations, and conditions which seem favorable in attracting migrating raptors. In past years, other possible lookout points were explored in Woodbury and Plymouth Counties. But the observations at these locations did not prove interesting enough to report birds observed as most raptors seen were common residents, and in small numbers. However, our careful studies of raptor migrations seems to have paid off this year at War Eagle Park. We discovered, with much excitement, that War Eagle Park is located at just the right point to observe migrating raptors as they follow the loess hills down to the junction of the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers, thereby 'shooting' out over a small point of South Dakota, and continue (presumably) into Nebraska to continue their flight over the Nebraska sand-hills.

I may mention, before continuing, that conditions were very favorable during our peak observation period (see below). The wind was out of the North at 15 miles per hour, the temperature was 75 degrees and rising, and a strong low front had just past through on 26 September. These are conditions by which peak migrations usually occur. But weather does not always cause or slow raptor migrations. I must further state that both Mr. Loftus and myself are very familiar with the identification of raptors, and were very selective in positive identifications, (e.g., when we had any doubt, we did not list the bird as observed). The following is a list of raptors observed during our peak observation period (i.e., when the largest numbers were seen during a given time span).

RAPTOR MIGRATION OBSERVATION
27 SEPTEMBER 1986
WAR EAGLE PARK
SIOUX CITY, IOWA

PEAK OBSERVATION PERIOD: 10:10 - 12:10 CENTRAL TIME

SPECIE	NUMBER	COMMENT
Swainson's Hawk	30	Many not counted?
Red-tailed Hawk	04	
Cooper's Hawk	04	Positive I.D.
American Kestrel	01	
Peregrine Falcon	02	Positive I.D.
Osprey	01	
Turkey Vulture	03	
Total Raptors Observed	45	


Finally, I must add that the above is a list of the raptors we considered to be migrating during this observation period. Cormorants were also observed in their migration pattern (approx. 75 of them) as well as White Pelicans (approx. 200). Since their numbers were so large, and the fact that they are not raptors, we did not include them on the list. The observation of the two Peregrine Falcons was a phenomenal sight as they flew directly overhead and were identified by their malar stripes and obvious falcon-like speed and flight. They were truly much swifter than any of the other raptors noted during our observations. The Swainson's hawks were observed in small 'kettles' of 5 or 6 at a time. At one point, we both thought we saw a very large kettle of hawks farther to the north over South Dakota, but were unable to make a positive i.d. on the specie because of the distance; they may have been broad-winged hawks. Two more "falcons" were also noted, but too distant to make out the specie; probably peregrines. The red-tails did not take the same flight pattern that the Swainson's and others did, but rather flew

directly overhead, following the loess hills south through town. It appeared to us that the majority of the raptors observed were utilizing the thermals created by the loess hills just to the point where the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers meet, at that point climbing high in small groups and then 'jetting' out over the two rivers over Nebraska. The only exception to this rule were the red-tails, kestrel, osprey and Turkey vultures.

In conclusion, we will continue to monitor this location throughout the fall migration period. If we can gain enough evidence that this location is so suited, we will attempt to hold annual raptor migration watches here in years to come.

If you have any questions or comments, please advise. We hope you will except the above for the IOU records.

Very Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas E. Trapp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DOUGLAS E. TRAPP, PRESIDENT
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