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Dear Jim,

Many thanks for promptly sending the Iowa summer report as well as the supplemental information. Your promptness and thoroughness makes my task much easier.

With regards to the rarities cited in your report, my thoughts are as follows:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: An intriguing record. Certainly common in captivity and most previous extralimital records are thought to be escapes. However, this species is increasing and expanding its range and is certainly a candidate for vagrancy. At present, I intend to treat it as a conjectural record, realizing that future sightings may eventually indicate it was actually a legitimate vagrant.

Prairie Falcon: Intuitively, this sighting does not sit well with me. His description sounds fairly good, but I am troubled by the bird's "buffy breast". I have never seen a Prairie Falcon that appeared to have buffy underparts. I wonder if he wasn't looking at juvenile Swainson's Hawks or perhaps even Red-taileds. Given the known breeding range of Prairie Falcons, I can't accept this records without better details.

Laughing Gulls: Both records are definitely second-year Franklin's Gulls.

Rufous Hummingbird: This sighting will not be included unless I receive some substantiating details. Could easily be last year's bird returning to the same feeder, but I need some details.

Steller's Jay: Not the most detailed description but the documentation leaves little doubt that the bird was correctly identified. Given the time of year, it must have escaped or been turned loose. I intend to treat it as a conjectural sighting.

Hope you have another eventful fall migration in Iowa. The birding has been rather routine here with no unusual rarities. This weekend's cold front was accompanied by the first wave of passerines with at least 19 species of warblers along Lake Erie yesterday.

Sincerely,

Bume