

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD

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Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Gyr falcon Falco Rusticolus
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): 1-16-93Number of birds seen: one Sex: ? Plumage: Gray Morph

Latilong: _____ Distribution Code: _____ Habitat Code: _____

Locality: Walden Ponds, Boulder County Elevation: Aprx. 5400 FtNearest town: Boulder County: BoulderTime(s) observed: 12:10 PM. to 12:25 PMDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): 15 min.

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

None

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

None

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):

Bright sun - at my backOptical equipment used (e.g. power, types): Swift 8.5x44: B+L, scope - 36 po.Distance and how measured: 70 yards from power-line poleIf photographed, type of equipment and film: —Who else photographed the bird: —Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying): Stayed atop pole-occasionally preened itself- Then flew in easterly direction. Relatively slow-powerful wingbeats.Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field: When first seen I assumed hawk because of size. Telescopa to 32 power revealed it falco species with lightly streaked head and thin moustache stripes. Eye br

Description (continued): indistinct, streaked whitish underparts
unmarked
untreated under-tail coverts. Especially noted that primaries
extended but half-way to tails tip. Legs heavily feathered.

Inner underwing only slightly darker on flying bird. Wide tail.
Strong wavering flight.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

None

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

East of ponds, sparsely treed fields. Riparian nearby.
Steep cliffs further east.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

Lack of 'helmet' and distinct eye brow (supercilium), plus
primary extension eliminate Peregrine + Prairie.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?
Gyr Falcon seen but once. Many prairie falcons seen recently.

And many prior Peregrine sightings

List books, illustration, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

Natl. Geographic

a) At time of observation: Peterson Field Guide - Hawks. Field Guide

b) After observation: Aud. Master Guides. Aud. Eng. Amer. Birds

This report was written from reports made during ✓, after observation ✓, from memory

Date and time report was written: 1-16-93

Reporting observer: JOE TEN BRINK Signature: Joe Ten Brink

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All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:

Return to: CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CITY PARK
DENVER, CO 80205

12-93-13

Reference to Gyrfalcon sighting at Walden Ponds Jan. 15, 1993.

About noon as I turned into the road to Walden Ponds, I noticed a large bird atop a tall power line pole. I drove about 70 yards past the pole so as to have the sun at my back. My binoculars revealed it to be a falcon. I then set up my telescope and trained it on the bird. My first impression was that it was a Prairie Falcon, but it lacked the heavy supercilium and seemed larger than those I'd seen two days previously on the plains east of Barr Lake. It did have a similar moustache stripe, but lacked auricular spots.

I then considered that it might be a Peregrine. But it lacked the helmet of a mature Peregrine, and the moustache stripe was less distinct than an immature. Its underparts were white with brownish stripes. Undertail coverts were unstreaked. Its legs were heavily feathered and extended over feet. Fortunately, the bird turned around and I noted that its primaries extended to only half of the length of the tail. I checked my Peterson's Hawk guide which disclosed this feature to be distinctive of Gyrfalcon. Armed with information from the guide, I examined the birds' head and nape which appeared a light brown. Its back appeared grayish brown. All of which pointed to gray morph immature Gyr.

When the falcon flew, I was momentarily taken aback by the slight patagial reminiscent of the Krider's hawk I'd seen a day earlier at 119th & Holly St. in Thornton. (Incidentally, the third year this presumably same Krider's has wintered here.) The guide showed that the immature grey morph has this feature. A lighter shade extended to the flight feathers which appeared almost pure white. *Black outer primaries*,

It flew in the direction of White Rocks Open space area whose cliffs would probably be suitable habitat.

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P.S. I neglected that its flight characteristics were powerful wingbeats - (slower than Prairie), a bit wavering, but at a high rate of speed.