

CFO-RC FILE #: 1998-38

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
SIGHT RECORD FORM

RESULTS: ACCEPTED 7-0
rec'd 2-1-98 ✓ (photos)

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPHS AND ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY.

SPECIES: GYR FALCON FALCO RUSTICOLUS
(Common Name) (Scientific Name)

DATE(S) OF OCCURRENCE: JANUARY 24, 1998

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 SEX: FEMALE PLUMAGE: IMMATURE

EXACT LOCATION: RAWHIDE POWER PLANT

COUNTY: LARIMER NEAREST TOWN: WELLINGTON ELEVATION: 5500'

LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 15 MINS TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION: 9:15 - 10:30 AM

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO SAW THE BIRD(S) WITH YOU:

JOHN VANDERPOEL, DICK SCHOTTLER, WARREN FINCH, RAY DAVIS AND MANY MORE.

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY SAW THE BIRD(S):

RON RYDER, STEVE DINSMORE, RAUHAER KOLDKOFF

LIGHT CONDITIONS (QUALITY; DIRECTION RELATIVE TO BIRD(S); POSITION):

OVERCAST SKY, BUT NOT POOR LIGHT.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: 10x40 BINOCULARS & 50X TELESCOPE

DISTANCE FROM BIRD (ESTIMATED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED): 100 YDS & 400 YDS

WAS BIRD PHOTOGRAPHED? _____ IF SO, HAVE YOU SUBMITTED PHOTOS? _____

WHO TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS? _____

DESCRIBE THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC HABITAT IN WHICH THE BIRD(S) OCCURRED:

RAWHIDE POWER PLANT HAS A RESERVOIR THAT REMAINS OPEN IN WINTER.

THE SURROUNDING AREA IS NATURAL PRAIRIE AND RANCH LANDS.

DESCRIBE THE BIRD'S BEHAVIOR (FLYING; FEEDING; HABITS; BEHAVIORS USED IN IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES OR IN SUPPORTING THE IDENTIFICATION):

FIRST SEEN MAKING 2 PASSES OVER THE OVERLOOK - THE SECOND TIME CHASING 2 MERGANSERS. THEN SEEN ATOP A TALL METAL POWER POLE.

DESCRIBE THE BIRD IN DETAIL. THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS REPORT. INCLUDE THE OVERALL SIZE AND SHAPE AND HOW YOU PLACED THE BIRD IN THE GENERAL GROUP THAT YOU DID. GIVE COMPLETE DETAILS OF PLUMAGE, INCLUDING HEAD, THROAT, UNDERSIDES, NAPE, BACK, WINGS AND TAIL. GIVE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS TO MARKS YOU USED TO IDENTIFY THE BIRD(S). DESCRIBE OTHER DETAILS, SUCH AS COLOR AND SHAPE OF BILL, LEGS, EYE, ETC. THAT WERE IMPORTANT IN MAKING THE IDENTIFICATION. (FILL OUT THIS PORTION EVEN IF PHOTOGRAPHS ARE SUBMITTED; YOU MAY ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS, DRAWINGS, FIELD SKETCHES OR COPY OF FIELD NOTES):

FIRST SEEN APPROXIMATING THE RAWHIDE OVERLOOK. OBVIOUS FALCON SHAPE WITH POINTED WINGS AND LONG TAIL. IMMEDIATELY GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF VERY LARGE SIZE. THIS WAS CONFIRMED AS IT FLEW OVER WITH VERY SLOW WING BEAT FOR A FALCON. AXILLARIES WELL SEEN AND NOT DARK. EXCELLENT TELESCOPE LOOKS AT THE PERCHED BIRD REVEALED A SUBSTANTIAL DARK STRIPE DOWN FROM THE EYE INTO THE MALAR AREA. THE BACK WAS UNIFORMLY BROWN, BUT WAS NOT VERY DARK. THE UNDERPARTS WERE HEAVILY STREAKED ALL THE WAY DOWN THE BODY. FOR THESE REASONS, WE THOUGHT THIS AN IMMATURE FEMALE, DARK MORPH GYRFALCON.

DISCUSS SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW YOU ELIMINATED THEM:

PEREGRINE FALCON - SMALLER SIZE, COMPLETE BLACK HOOD.

PRAIRIE FALCON - SMALLER SIZE, NO DARK AXILLARIES.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES?

SEEN ONCE BEFORE - IN 1981 BEYOND PREWITT RESERVOIR, STERLING, COLORADO.

HAVE SEEN THE OTHER FALCONS VERY OFTEN.

LIST BOOKS, GUIDES, RECORDINGS OR OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED AND HOW THIS INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTIFICATION (DURING AND AFTER OBSERVATION):

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC GUIDE,

THIS REPORT WAS MADE FROM NOTES MADE DURING _____ OR AFTER _____ OBSERVATION, OR LATER FROM MEMORY ☒.

DATE OF WRITTEN REPORT: 1/24/98

REPORTING OBSERVER: PETER R. GENT. SIGNATURE: Peter R. Gent

ADDRESS: Mark Janos
10 Sedum Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001

CFO-RC FILE #: 1998-38
rec'd 1-18-98 ✓

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
SIGHT RECORD FORM

RESULTS : _____

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPHS AND ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY.

SPECIES: Gyr Falcon Falco rusticolus
(Common Name) (Scientific Name)

DATE(S) OF OCCURRENCE: 18 Jan 1998

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 SEX: F(?) PLUMAGE: Juv. - greyish-brown

EXACT LOCATION: Hamilton Reservoir, Ramhide Energy Station

COUNTY: Larimer NEAREST TOWN: Wellington ELEVATION: _____

LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: ~ 15 min. TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION: 0800-0815

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO SAW THE BIRD(S) WITH YOU: None. (Several saw it later)

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY SAW THE BIRD(S): Bill Lisowsky, Dave Leatherman
plus many others (see COBIRDS postings)

LIGHT CONDITIONS (QUALITY; DIRECTION RELATIVE TO BIRD(S); POSITION): Good
although overcast. Sun was to east, bird mainly to north &
west. I was facing north.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: 8x40 Zeiss binocs. Too close & too
windy to use scope

DISTANCE FROM BIRD (ESTIMATED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED): 30 - 300 meters
(constantly moving)

WAS BIRD PHOTOGRAPHED? Not by me IF SO, HAVE YOU SUBMITTED PHOTOS? Not Known

WHO TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS? Bill Lisowsky. (Leatherman may have got some)

DESCRIBE THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC HABITAT IN WHICH THE BIRD(S) OCCURRED: Over
dam & water at reservoir. "Buzzed" ducks & geese on
mud flat & swimming.

DESCRIBE THE BIRD'S BEHAVIOR (FLYING; FEEDING; HABITS; BEHAVIORS USED IN IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES OR IN SUPPORTING THE IDENTIFICATION):

Flying the whole time. Hung almost motionless into wind
then low flight at waterfront. Later circled me. Rapid
wing beat. Very rapid flight low on water (< 1 m.) and into
strong wind. (Flight reminded me of rapid wingbeat of Spotted Sandpiper)

DESCRIBE THE BIRD IN DETAIL. THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS REPORT. INCLUDE THE OVERALL SIZE AND SHAPE AND HOW YOU PLACED THE BIRD IN THE GENERAL GROUP THAT YOU DID. GIVE COMPLETE DETAILS OF PLUMAGE, INCLUDING HEAD, THROAT, UNDERSIDES, NAPE, BACK, WINGS AND TAIL. GIVE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS TO MARKS YOU USED TO IDENTIFY THE BIRD(S). DESCRIBE OTHER DETAILS, SUCH AS COLOR AND SHAPE OF BILL, LEGS, EYE, ETC. THAT WERE IMPORTANT IN MAKING THE IDENTIFICATION. (FILL OUT THIS PORTION EVEN IF PHOTOGRAPHS ARE SUBMITTED; YOU MAY ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS, DRAWINGS, FIELD SKETCHES OR COPY OF FIELD NOTES):

Large as a Red-tailed Hawk. Similar shape and flight as Peregrine and Prairie Falcon which we frequently see in the area, but was larger, more evenly colored although with lengthwise barring on breast. Long tail.

DISCUSS SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW YOU ELIMINATED THEM: Peregrine - my bird lacked cap & moustaches. Prairie Falcon - my bird lacked black axillaries. Thicker body & broader wings. N. Goshawk - gyrfalcon had dark (not red) eyes & lacked eyelins. Wings more pointed and faster, stronger flight.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES?

Have seen in Alaska as well as many captives shown by Falconers. (Have several slides of the captives - white, grey & dark morphs)

LIST BOOKS, GUIDES, RECORDINGS OR OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED AND HOW THIS INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTIFICATION (DURING AND AFTER OBSERVATION): During: Not Goshawk & Peterson. After: Peterson's "Hawks", "A Photographic Guide to N. Am. Raptors", "Hawks in Flight", "Falcon's of the World", Palmer's "Handbook", "Advanced Birding".

THIS REPORT WAS MADE FROM NOTES MADE DURING ☒ OR AFTER ☐ (some after I got home)

OBSERVATION, OR LATER FROM MEMORY

DATE OF WRITTEN REPORT: 20 Jan '99 (with later comments about other observers)

REPORTING OBSERVER: Ronald A. Pyler SIGNATURE: Ronald A. Pyler

ADDRESS: Mark Janos
10 Sedum Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001

748 Eastdale Dr.
Ft. Collins, CO 80524



1998-38

Didn't have a CFO
form
rec'd 1-22-98

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

SUPPORTING DETAILS: UNCOMMON OR RARE SPECIES/HIGH NUMBERS

CBC Name _____ Date _____ Compiler _____
Observer writing this account & date Scott Rashid 1/27/98

SPECIES Gyrffalcon NUMBER, AGE, SEX 1 SY Female
Distance from bird(s) 8 Meters Relative size of bird Larger than A Raven

HEAD & NECK (Describe forehead, crown, auricular, malar region, median line, etc.)
Head Dark Bill color: Slate Gray, Very undefined helmet, The
Moustachial Stripe flares straight down.

EYE & LORES (Describe supercilium, ring, stripe, color, etc.) _____
Eyes, Dark, possibly black. Lores, Dark

UPPER & LOWER MANDIBLES Both Upper and Lower Mandibles are Dark
LEGS & FEET I did not see the birds feet. It was perched

UPPERPARTS (Describe nape, back, rump, upper tail coverts, etc.) Nape; Dark
The Falcons body color is a dark Grayish Brown (Sepia) color
Tail extends past the primaries when the bird is perched

UNDERPARTS (Describe throat, belly, side, flanks, crissum, etc.) _____
The birds underparts including throat is streaked dark gray-brown
As the bird flies, it appears to be dark with light streaking

RECTRICES (Describe inner, middle, outer tail feathers, color pattern, shape, etc.)
Tail is very long. When the bird is perched, the primaries only
extend about $\frac{1}{2}$ down the tail.

WING (Describe color, length, shape, linings, bars, coverts, leading & trailing edges,
etc.) Wing color is a Sepia color, same as the birds back. Wings don't
seem as pointed as other falcon species, But they are thick at the shold

VOCALIZATION none

BEHAVIOR The Falcon perches on telephone poles that are on the side
of the road. The Falcons flight is very direct also, the bird has shallow
wing beats. This falcon covers a great deal of ground in a short period
of time.

Date of observation 1/23/98 Time 07:27 AM Weather Clear Sky Sunny

Duration of observation 11 Minutes Bird - Sun orientation Sun east of bird

Exact location Hamilton Reservoir Buckeye Road Third telephone east of the

Habitat open Other observers _____ entrance of the reservoir

Optical equipment Binoculars

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS I have seen the Gyrffalcon two additional times
after the original observation. The bird flies very fast and very
direct.

AN ACCOMPANYING SKETCH OR PHOTOGRAPH CAN BE MOST HELPFUL

DOCUMENTATION FORM *rec'd 8-9-98 ✓*

Species: Gyrfalcon

Number: 1 immature female gray phase

Location: Hamilton Reservoir, Larimer Co., CO and area to southeast

Habitat: reservoir and surrounding short-grass prairie

Date: 22, 24, 31 January 1998

Time: 8:10-11:45 a.m. (22 January) and 8:54-10:15 a.m. (24 January)

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 1/2 West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird(s): Ron A. Ryder, m.ob.

PHOTOS x3

Description of bird(s): The following is an account of the observation on 22 January. We first spotted the bird sitting on a pole along Buckeye Road, just east of Hamilton Reservoir. The size of the bird was impressive: it appeared nearly the size of a Red-tailed Hawk when perched. This was accentuated by the long-tailed, short-winged appearance. The head was small with a prominent dark whisker mark and a light supercilium. The bill was dark with some yellow on the cere. The chin and throat were pale. The underparts were light-colored with fine, dark streaking. The bird had a unique white patch just above the left leg, easily visible when the bird was perched. The legs and feet were yellow. In flight, the wings had a distinct lead-colored (gray) cast. The mantle was slightly darker than the upperwings, having a brownish-gray color. When perched, I thought the bird had a much browner appearance than it did in flight, except for the upperwings which still appeared lead gray. When perched, the mantle and upperwings appeared brown with narrow, buffy feather edges on the scapulars, secondaries, and secondary coverts. When perched, the wingtips stopped several inches short of the tail tip. The tail was a light brown color, noticeably paler than the mantle and wings. At some angles, the tail almost appeared to have a reddish-brown cast. The flight was powerful and direct with rapid, deep wingbeats. Flight was powerful and direct and reminded me of the flight of a Peregrine without the "rowing" motion in the wings. The wings were very broad at the base. The very large size is strong evidence that the bird was a female. The pale feather edgings on the mantle and strongly streaked underparts, face pattern, and extent of the streaking on the underparts identified the bird as an immature. The general consensus was that the bird was a gray-phase individual.

The bird's hunting techniques were interesting. The bird had a distinct preference for Canada Geese and ignored the hundreds of ducks using the reservoir. I saw the bird chase >10 flocks of Canada Geese. On all chases, the Gyrfalcon succeeded in driving at least one goose to the ground. However, the bird killed just one of these geese. From its perch on a phone pole, the Gyrfalcon would take flight and fly to a point behind and slightly above the geese. It would then rush the flock, eventually singling out a single goose. On at least two occasions, it hit the goose in mid-air, causing the goose to tumble to the ground. But most of the time it simply "rode" the goose to the ground. On 31 January, we saw the Gyrfalcon knock down a goose at 9:25 a.m. By 9:55 a.m., the Gyrfalcon had consumed more than 80% of the meat on the carcass and flown to a nearby perch.

I carefully examined the bird for any signs of recent captivity. The bird carried no obvious jesses or bands. The bird was not especially wary, but this could easily be explained by the fact that this bird probably had limited (if any) experience with humans.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of general body shape, long tail, facial markings, and very large size eliminate other falcon species, especially Peregrine and Prairie.

Previous experience with species: I have seen four other Gyrfalcons: 2 in Minnesota, 1 in Nebraska, and 1 in Massachusetts. I am very familiar with both Peregrine and Prairie Falcons.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were generally good to excellent. Estimated viewing distance often >300m, but as close as 25m on a couple of occasions. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America
Dunne, Sibley, and Sutton. Hawks in Flight

How long before field notes written? written during first observation

How long before this form completed? completed 8 February 1998



