

Species: Harris' Hawk
(Vernacular name)Parabuteo unicinctus
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 1 August, 31 August, 1 Sept, 3 Sept, 9 Sept 1978 to _____
Time Bird Seen: _____Locality: Head of South Creek, on the SW slope of Mount Ellen, Henry Mtns,
Garfield Co, Utah, 35 km south of Hanksville, Wayne Co, Utah.
Nearest town, county and state: _____ Elevation ranged from 2770-3075 metersOptical equipment: 7x and 10x binoculars

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: _____

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: adult (with a slight hint of
banding on the underside base of the tail).
Light conditions: clear, sunnyDistance from bird, and how measured: for the five sightings, distances ranged from
15 to 400 meters, but were usually about 100 meters (estimated).

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

In four of five sightings, the bird flew close (w/in 5 meters) to the ground flapping and soaring. In three sightings, the bird landed on a sagebrush bush for a short time, then flew on. In the fifth sighting, the hawk flew overhead, in a relatively straight line, at about 100m altitude.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Shrub/grass, consisting of sagebrush, oak, snowberry, locoweed, and several perennial grasses. The shrub cover is dense, but low (less than 1 meter). Stands of aspen, fir, or spruce occur occasionally. Slope of the terrain ranges from 16-32° (i.e., steep!)

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):
Martin Bray, P.O. Box 33, Hanksville, Utah 84734
Gordon Hildebrandt, 1161 Hilton Ave, Napa, CA 94558

marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field.

A dark, chocolate-brown buteo-like hawk, but with a ~~Q~~ slightly longer tail than most buteos I've seen. Red-brown patch at the wrist, and also a large red-brown patch on the underside, forward portion of each wing. Proximal half of the tail is white, as is a very narrow band at the tip. Faint hint of banding on the underside proximal portion of the tail. I saw this bird on two occasions, Martin Bray twice also, and Gordon Hildebrant once. All identifications were ~~not~~ independent, and agree with the above description in every detail, except for my first sighting, when ~~I~~ I saw all the above features except for the narrow ^{white} band at the distal end of the tail. Also, the faint banding on the underside of the tail was only seen once, by me, at a range of less than 15 meters.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

no vocalizations

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

Golden eagle--at first I thought this is what it was, because of the basic color similarity (dark brown, white at base of tail). This notion lasted about 5 seconds, at which time I could get a feel for the size of the bird, and I saw the red-brown patches on wrists and wing ~~lining~~ linings, as well as the darker color of the Harris' hawk, and the absence of any other white areas, as I would expect in an imm. Golden eagle.

Marsh hawk--I ruled this bird out immediately, due to 1) chunkier body, broader wings, 2) very uniform, dark brown color, 3) white on tail which covers almost the entire proximal half, not just the base, 4) red-brown patches.

Rough-legged hawk--ruled out immediately because of uniform dark brown color and red-brown patches.

I have seen the Harris' hawk several times, but not since 1964. I have ~~not~~ seen more Marsh hawks than I could ever count, a fair number of Rough-leggeds, and saw eagles almost every day all summer.

NAME (print): Dirk Van Vuren

Mailing address: Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Oregon St. University,
Corvallis, OR 97331

Signature: *Dirk Van Vuren*

Return to:

Hugh E. Kingery
869 Milwaukee Street
Denver, Colorado 80206