

CAPE MAY BIRD OBSERVATORY

NEW JERSEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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1 October 1984

Dr. Clayton M. White
Department of Zoology
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah 84601

Dear Dr. White,

I recently received a letter from Sherry Teresa indicating you would like details on a Zone-tailed Hawk sighting in Capitol Reef National Monument.

On 3 June 1984 I was camped near the park headquarters residential area during Dr. Jim Enderson's survey of the park's nesting Peregrine Falcon population. At approximately 3:30 pm I spotted a bird soaring over a nearby ridge that, at first glance, appeared to be a Turkey Vulture. But, on closer inspection with Zeiss Dialyte 10 X 40 binoculars, proved to be a Zone-tailed Hawk. The long black tail was prominently barred with white and it soared with a pronounced dihedral, rocking form side to side on the strong updrafts. The underwing pattern was similar to a Turkey Vulture with dark wing coverts and patagium and light flight feathers. Since the body, head and undertail coverts were an even dark color I assumed the bird was an adult. The birds size and relative lengths of wings, head and tail were roughly equal to that of a Turkey Vulture though flight style was considerably different. The bird flapped more than a Turkey Vulture and when it did it looked much more buteoine.

The bird was observed for approximately two minutes at a distance of about 250 yards. Other observers present were Anne Van Sweringen, Sherry Teresa, Dan Taylor, Jim Saylor and Lynn Woodman, all members of the Peregrine Survey team, plus our helicopter pilot Burt Metcalf. With the exception of Anne Van Sweringen I believe this was the first sighting of Zone-tailed Hawk for all of these people. My experience with the species is limited to a five week birding trip to southeastern Arizona with Ms. Van Sweringen in April and May on 1983. The canyon bottoms and riparian areas at Capitol Reef appeared to be very similar to habitats in which we observed breeding adults near Patagonia, Arizona in mid May. We both commented on the apparant suitability of the Capitol Reef riparian areas for breeding of Zone-tailed Hawk. During this trip, we observed Zone-tailed Hawks on numerous occasions perched, soaring and coursing low over the ground.

Presently I am operating a Peregrine Falcon banding station for William S. Clark's Cape May Point Raptor Banding Project. We have now broken our all time record Peregrine catch of 23 in a single fall season and are currently at 34 birds, including one Peregrine Fund release bird and one wild produced bird from a tower in New Jersey. We are all hoping this is an indication of good production on the Canadian and Greenland tundra and not meerely a figment of seasonal weather patterns.

I believe Sherry is planning on joining me for a few days of trapping before the Raptor Research convention in late October. Please pass on my greetings to her if you happen to be in contact with her. I hope this report is of some use to you. If you are attending the Raptor Research meetings in Blacksburg, Virginia I look forward to meeting you there.

Sincerely,


Christopher Schultz