

BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of unusual birds. It may be used flexibly and need not be used at all. Leave blank any details not observed. Attach additional sheets if necessary. Please print or type. Attach drawings, photographs, etc.; include all photos if an obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to the Secretary of the LOS Bird Records Committee.

1. Common and scientific name: *Rough-legged Hawk (Buteo lagopus)*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g. 2ad. in breeding plumage): Ad ♀?
3. Locality: Louisiana: Orleans Parish: North of Blind Lagoon near Big Oak Island
4. Date(s) when seen: 26 Dec 1988
5. Times of day when seen: 3:00-3:15 P.M.
6. Reporting observer and address:
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird:
Paul McKenzie
John Sevenair
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird:
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): *Excellent - sun behind observers in western sky - bird to the east*
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition):
Bausch & Lomb 20x SPOTTING SCOPE
11. Distance to bird: *ca. 150 m*
12. Duration of observation: *ca. 30 sec for Sevenair, ca. 3 min. for McKenzie*
13. Habitat (general and specific):
Edge of fresh marsh (junction of woods + marsh) and fresh marsh
14. Behavior (flying, feeding, resting, etc.; include and stress any habits used in identification): *Bird first spotted perched at edge of marsh - later flew over marsh where it was observed hovering over marsh before being attacked and chased out of view by adult ♂ Northern Harrier*
15. Description (Include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen. Include if possible: total length; body bulk; shape, bill, eye, and leg characteristics; color and pattern of plumage, etc. Stress field marks):
See attached discussion and Figure

16. Voice:

17. Similar species (include how they are eliminated by your observations):

See attached discussion

18. Photographs (Was it photographed? By whom? Attached?):

None taken

19. Previous experience with this species:

McKenzie familiar ^{with} adult and immature light phase birds in Maryland. Habitat at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Dorchester County Md, where species is often observed; is similar to habitat of this observation

20. Aids: List books, illustrations, birders, etc. used in identification

a) at time of observation;

b) after observation: *see attached list*

21. This description written from: notes made during observation; notes made after observation; memory.

22. Are you positive of your identification? Yes. If not, explain:

23. Signature of reporter: *Paul M. McKenzie*

24. Date and time of writing this account:

28 Dec 1988

Details for light phase Rough-legged Hawk observed on the New Orleans CBC 26 Dec. 1988, by Paul Mc Kenzie and John Sevenair.

This bird was first spotted perched on a dead tree at the edge of a fresh marsh. The hawk was a large buteo with a conspicuous blackish area from the middle of the breast to the approximate junction of the legs with the lower belly (Fig. 1) (seen by both McKenzie and Sevenair). This area contrasted with the lightly streaked upper breast. Because the bird was "haunched" down on its perch, the feathered tarsi were not visible. The degree of contrast on the breast suggested a bird in immature plumage or an adult female; adult males usually show less of a contrast. Head appeared brownish with some streaking. When the bird flew from its perch, McKenzie kept the bird in view with the spotting scope and got excellent dorsal and ventral views as the bird circled over the marsh then hovered over the marsh before being attacked and chased off by an adult male Northern Harrier. In flight the bird appeared to be a large, lanky, angular buteo with long wings and tail. The bird had broader and longer wings than the harassing harrier. The bird appeared larger than a Red-tailed Hawk with longer wings and longer tail. When circling over the marsh, the bird held its wings in a dihedral and the following field notes were taken on the ventral view of the bird: 1) the primaries were whitish with conspicuous blackish tips, 2) the conspicuous blackish carpal patches contrasted with the whitish primaries and lightly streaked wing linings, 3) the wing linings lacked patalgalial marks, 4) the long tail was mostly white with a broad blackish subterminal band, 5) the terminal band was very thin and appeared whitish, 6) a faint, indistinct dark band appeared anterior to the dark subterminal band, and 7) the lightly streaked upper breast and undertail coverts contrasted with the blackish belly- this gave the bird the impression that the blackish area was situated in the approximate middle of the bird (Fig. 1).

While hovering over the marsh, the following field notes were taken on the dorsal view of the bird: 1) a whitish patch was present at the base of the outer primaries and contrasted with the brownish wings and back, and 2) the long tail was mostly white with a broad, blackish subterminal band.

Similar species

Red-tailed Hawks are smaller with shorter wings and tail. Different light colored morphs of the Red-tailed Hawk that have a belly band usually have patalgalial markings on the wing linings and never have the combination of blackish belly, conspicuous blackish carpal patches, and whitish tail with broad blackish subterminal band. Adult eastern Redtails have solid reddish tails, and immatures have tails that are finely streaked throughout their length. Krider's and Fuertes' color morphs lack the blackish belly and broad blackish subterminal band on the tail.

Light phase Swainson's Hawks have similar flight but have slimmer wings, the flight feathers are conspicuously darker than the underwing linings, and the birds lack the blackish carpal patches, blackish belly area, and white tail with broad blackish subterminal band.

Light phase Ferruginous Hawks often hold their wings above the

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horizon and show similar whitish patches at the base of the primaries (in a dorsal view), but they are slightly larger with chestnut thighs (adults) and all white tail (ventral view of adults). Adult and immature light phase Ferruginous Hawks lack the blackish belly band, have less conspicuous carpal patches, and lack the prominent blackish subterminal band on the tail.

Note: I am not exactly sure what the correct age and sex of the bird is. This is an extremely variable species (personal experience in Maryland), with many intergradations between light phase and dark phase birds. Additionally, there is a conspicuous lack of agreement on field marks for various plumages in many field guides. David Evans, who has extensively studied Rough-legs during migration at Duluth, Minnesota, states (1983) regarding light phase, adult Rough-legs, "the tail is usually white at the base, sometimes with dark spotting or incomplete bars, and has a broad subterminal band and a white tip. Adult light phase males often have a larger, white basal area with 2 or 3 well-defined, dark subterminal bands. Light phase immatures have ... a single blackish subterminal tail band". Based on the degree of contrast of the blackish belly and the upper breast of the bird of this report, I would say that the bird is probably an adult female. Notwithstanding the attempt to age and sex this bird, the combination of size, behavior, flight profile, and the presence of a blackish belly band, prominent blackish carpal patches, and a whitish tail with a broad, blackish subterminal band, identifies this bird unquestionably as a light phase Rough-legged Hawk.

Books examined:

- Clark, W.S., and B.K. Wheeler. 1987. Hawks. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass. 198pp.
- Dunne, P., D. Sibley, and C. Sutton. 1988. Hawks in flight. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass. 254pp.
- Evans, D.L. 1983. Pp. 252-263 in The Audubon Society master guide to birding, Vol. 1, J. Farrand, Jr., ed. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. 447pp.
- National Geographic Society. 1983. Field guide to birds of North America. National Geographic Society, Wash. D.C. 464pp.
- Peterson, R.T. 1980. A field guide to the birds. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass. 384pp.
- Robbins, C.S., B. Bruun, and H.S. Zim. 1966. A guide to field identification birds of North America. Western Publ. Co., Inc. New York. 340pp.

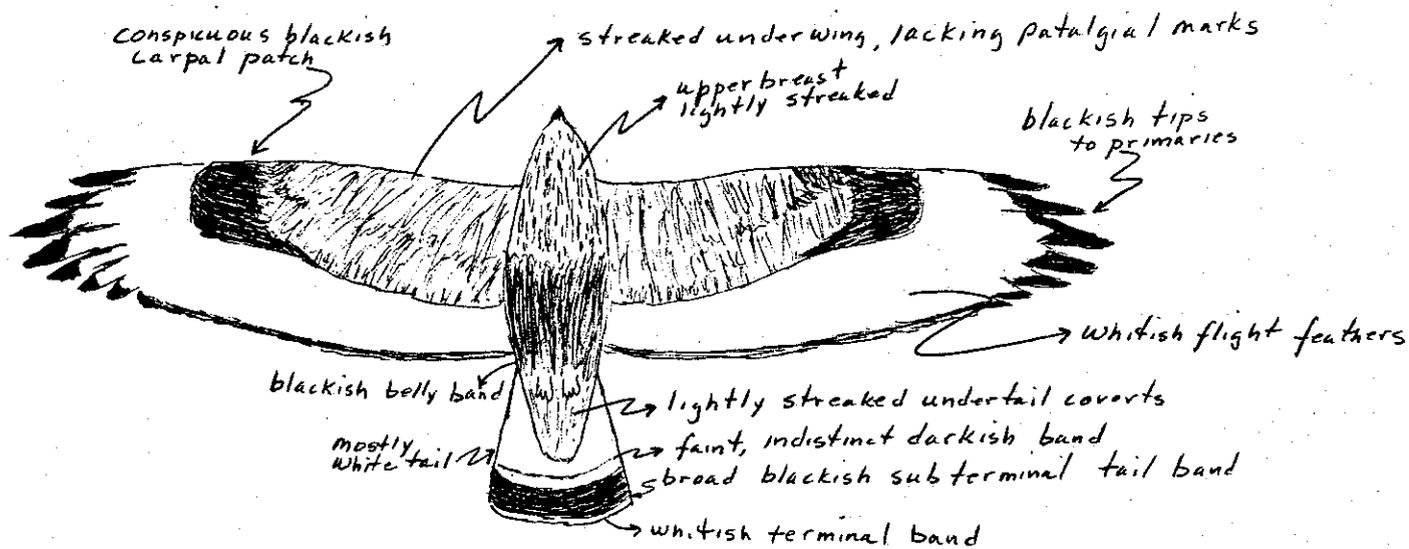


Fig 1. Light phased Rough-legged Hawk; Big Oak Island north of Blind Lagoon, Orleans Parish, New Orleans CBC, 12/26/88.

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Validation Form

Record number: 89-9 Species: Rough-legged Hawk

Committee member: MUTH Date of Review: 4.24.89

Circulation: First: 1; Second: ; Third: .

Decision:

Accept:

Reject; origin questionable:

Reject; identification questionable:

X

Accept: (origin)

Comments (please type or print):

Round: 19

PMK, N.O. CBC, 26 Dec 88

(Use reverse side for addition comments, if necessary)

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Validation Form

Record number: 89-9 Species: Rough-legged Hawk

Committee member: Donna L. Dittmann Date of Review: 2 April 1989

Circulation: First: XX; Second: ; Third: .

Decision:

Accept: (identification) XXX Accept (origin) XXXX

Reject; origin questionable:

Reject; indentification questionable:

Comments (please type or print):

Excellent description. I really wish more effort was made to document such noteworthy records by photographs (or specimens).

Round 19.

(Use reverse side for addition comments, if necessary)

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Validation Form

Round 19

Record number: 89-9 Species: Rough-legged Hawk

Committee member: Steven W. Cardiff Date of Review: 26 May 1989

Circulation: First: X; Second: ; Third: .

Decision:

Accept: identification and origin X
Reject; origin questionable:
Reject; identification questionable:

Comments (please type or print):

I accept, with a few misgivings:

- 1) Views relatively brief and mainly by one observer. No details from Sevenair. Of course, no photos.
- 2) It continues to bother me that many LA reports of this species come from marshy habitats. There certainly seems to be a big difference in habitat preference of this species in the east vs. west.
- 3) Feathered tarsi not seen
- 4) The observer does not emphasize the "pale headed-look" of Rough-leg.
- 5) I have never considered Rough-legged Hawk larger than Red-tailed. They are about the same size sex for sex. They are proportioned differently (ie. R-L seems longer winged, smaller headed and billed), but I don't think of R-L as being longer tailed.
- 6) We only have about 6 specimens here, but from above, each one has what I would call a white-based tail with a dark gray or brown distal $\frac{1}{2}$. Within the dark distal $\frac{1}{2}$ there are darker and lighter bands. So, it bothers me that this bird is described as having an all white tail with broad dark subterminal band.

Nonetheless, there doesn't seem to be anything else that comes close to fitting the description and I feel that McKenzie is pretty reliable when it comes to hawks.

(Use reverse side for addition comments, if necessary)

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Validation Form

Record number: 89-9 Species: Rough-legged Hawk

Committee member: CRIDER Date of Review: 10 Jun 89

Circulation: First: X; Second: ; Third: .

Decision:
Accept: X
Reject; origin questionable:
Reject; identification questionable:

Comments (please type or print):

Excellent description by McKenzie (despite the fact that the feathered tarsi were not observed).

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Validation Form

Record number: 89-9 Species: Rough-legged Hawk

Committee member: Burford Mac. Myers III Date of Review: 24 June 1989

Circulation: First: X; Second: ; Third: .

Decision:

Accept: (identification) X Accept (origin) X
Reject; origin questionable:
Reject; identification questionable:

Comments (please type or print):

Good details and analysis.

Louisiana Ornithological Society

Bird Records Committee

Validation Form

Record Number 89-9 Species Rough-legged Hawk
Committee Member's Name Porrington Date of Review 8/5/89
Circulation: First ; Second ; Third
Decision: Accept
Reject, origin questionable
Reject, identification questionable

Comments (please type or print):

Good description of a light-phased
Rough-legged Hawk. ~~The~~