

# LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for. Attach additional pages or files as necessary. Please print or type for hard copy. For electronic copy, be sure to save this file to your computer before entering text. Attach field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed (if hard copy), mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216, or e-mail electronic copy as an attachment to Paul Edward Conover at <[zoiseaux@lusfiber.net](mailto:zoiseaux@lusfiber.net)> .

1. English and Scientific names: Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):  
1 first year bird
3. Parish: Jefferson Davis  
Specific Locality: Faul Road just north of intersection with Lone Pine Road.
4. Date(s) when observed: 17 November, 2001
5. Time(s) of day when observed: Mid-day
6. Reporting observer and city/state address: Paul E. Conover, Lafayette LA
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): David P. Muth. Muth submitted his report about a month after the sighting with accompanying sketch drawn the day of the sighting. Muth volunteered to do the report as I was submitting video for the Ferruginous Hawk seen later that day.
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Sunny day, bird was going N-S to our E. Conditions were good.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Zeiss 10s.
11. Distance to bird(s): The bird was fairly low for an eagle, not a speck by any means.
12. Duration of observation: I first saw this bird overhead a little over a mile north of I-10, and watched it until it disappeared to the south, although for part of that time it could have only been IDed as an eagle due to the departing angle. There were no obstructions;

that land is really flat and the only trees were right next to us and they weren't in the way. The bird wasn't in a power stoop; I'd say that I watched that bird for at least 30 seconds and perhaps longer. I'm not sure where David got 5-10 seconds; that's patently impossible given the landscape and the circumstances of observation.

13. Habitat: Shell road through ag fields with a thin treeline of young hackberries along the ditch.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):

David and I had been raptor-searching all day long. A Ferruginous had been reported not long before along Hwy 380 near Jenuis Road, so we started there and struck out. We drove around spotting raptors in case the hawk was wide-ranging. We considered the Landfill near Welsh as a possible spot for wandering hawks.

We stopped on Faul Road near some trees so David could decaffeinate, and I started birding the trees. There were two yellowrumps in the trees that I was studying. David returned and asked if there was anything. I said yellowrumps and he laughed at me. I kept looking at a yellowrump in the treetop above me and a dark shape crossed the field of view above it. I focused out and saw a big dark raptor that instantly registered as having the markings of a Golden Eagle.

I told David to look at the yellowrump, and when he said, "You mother\*\*\*\*\*. F\*\*\* you!" I knew he was on the eagle. I told him that he should study yellowrumps more.

We watched it and started noting field marks aloud, and watched it soar on a line toward I-10, commenting that maybe we'd see it again when we returned to Thornwell. We didn't, but we did find the Ferruginous.

We got back in the car and continued to bird. After a while, David took some paper and made his notes/sketch.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

A large dark brown bird that was obviously more massive than our buteos, although it had a buteo-like feel. The bird was gliding on a direct line high enough that it seemed to be moving slowly, with its wings slightly swept back at the wrist. Two large eye-shaped white patches stood out against the dark brown wings, positioned at the base of the primaries. The tail was white with a distinct dark terminal band.

The head and bill were relatively small versus Bald Eagle.

16. Voice:

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

This bird was clearly more massive than any dark-morph Buteo, young White-tailed Hawk, or any Harris's Hawk, and differed in its suite of markings from any of them. Caracara has a different shape and pattern, as do longshots like Black Hawk or Zone-tailed.

Turkey Vulture has different flight profile, shape, and pattern.

Bald Eagle is the only contender in terms of size. Subadult Bald Eagle has a much larger head and bill that would have been obvious at the distance where we had our best looks, and generally has much more diffuse white markings on the underparts, underwings, and tail, not the crisp iconic pattern of young Golden Eagle.

This particular individual was instantly recognizable by its pattern, which was typical of 1<sup>st</sup> year Golden Eagle.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): None. In 2001, I only had a videocamera hooked to a scope, which would have taken too long to disengage.

19. Previous experience with this species: I had seen only one Golden Eagle in Louisiana at that point, but many across their western range. I had pretty extensive experience with similar species, including Bald Eagle.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation:

b. after observation:

21. This description is written from: Memory, and after 20 years. I'm aware of the deficiency of memories and how the mind fills in details after the fact, but my image of the bird matches what Muth's record shows, and if Muth read the background info, he could vouch for it.

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain: Yes. The bird was a "classic" example.

23. Date: 18 June 2020

Time:

24. May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page?

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If yes, may we include your name with the report? \_\_\_\_\_