

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage): 2 juveniles
3. Locality: Cameron Parish
Specific Locality: Rutherford Beach immediately S of Willow Island
4. Date(s) when observed: 11/02/2019
5. Time(s) of day when observed: about 12:50 to about 12:56 pm
6. Reporting observer and address: Paul Conover, Lafayette, LA
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): A couple, both YRARF participants.
8. Other observers who *independently identified* the bird(s): The remainder of the YRARF group with Oscar Johnson, Casey Wright, Eamon Corbett, and Anna Hiller were already aware of the birds' presence when I called them from down the beach, and probably spotted the birds before me.
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Optimal when bird was perched closest. Excellent light, sunny with both blue sky and clouds for background, birds to our north
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): 10x Zeiss at first look, then through Nikon d3300/200 mm lens viewfinder, and also at great length through Nikon Fieldscope III with 20-60 zoom.
11. Distance to bird(s): Given the size of the birds they may not have been as close as it seems; hard to say. Perhaps 200 yards.
12. Duration of observation: Over 5 minutes, I'd say.
13. Habitat: Over beach and beach grassland strip.
14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation: The birds were circling at a relatively low altitude to my E when I spotted them; I had been pointing out plovers to the W and turning to do sky scans as often as possible as it had been a good raptor flight day, and on one turn I noted 2 dark birds well down the beach. They were obviously eagles of some kind, and the binos showed them to be Golden Eagles. I started snapping photos and waited until they came close enough to get diagnostic shots then called Casey. She let me know they were already on them and were in the act of calling me. The birds circled slowly N of us then swung back to the beach, giving great looks. Knowing that I had adequate docu shots I switched to a scope to look at finer details. Through the scope and the great lighting, I got crystal clear looks with great detail.
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):

Relatively huge dark raptors compared to the RTHUs and other raptors seen that day. Obviously eagles by large size and illusion of moving very slowly as they circled (due I guess to their larger size that made them seem closer than they were and their large turn radius that made their soaring circles seem longer to complete).

Long wings with 6 elongated primary “fingers” that were conspicuous when pointing outwards, and that gave the end of the wings a curved appearance when swept back. Wingspan greatly exceeded body length. Wings dark with white patches on underwings that almost looked like eyes staring down from a dark bird. White patches were the adjacent white bases of inner primaries and perhaps outer secondaries. Similar but smaller white patch on dorsal surface of wings.

Tail long and in certain positions seemed wedge-shaped. Tail base white, with broad and fairly distinctly demarcated blackish terminal or subterminal band. From beneath, feathered tarsi covered much of pale tail base.

Head small relative to overall proportions of birds, dark but with golden hackles on nape clearly visible through binoculars and very obvious through scope. In life and in photos, I thought I was seeing small white spots lateral to neck on one bird.

Bill gray-based with dark tip, yellow cere. Dark eye, yellow feet.

16. Voice: Not heard.

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

Young Bald Eagle by plumage, body proportions, size and shape of head and bill. Other dark raptors by size and plumage pattern.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Yes.

19. Previous experience with this species: Seen a few times prior in LA, and as recently as last summer out west.

21. Are you positive of your identification if not, explain: Yes

22. Date: 11/05/2019

























