

1998-33

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

ACCEPTED 7-0

RED SHOULDERED HAWKButeo lineatusLocation: Rocky Ford SWA; Otero County; Rocky Ford, ColoradoDate: March 1, 1998Setting:

I was birding with Brandon Percival. We were near the first pond when I observed the hawk at close range in my binoculars. It was nearly overhead. I moved to the side to see it better and saw it from the rear, side and part of the front. The bird turned to look at me. It perched midway up a large leafless cottonwood, just above the heavier brush and cover along the hillside. I watched it from as close as 25 yards with binoculars (B&L Elites 10x40x) until it flew. I then observed it in flight for about 30 seconds. This was a brief viewing but the range was very short and conditions were good. Rocky Ford SWA is a beautiful riparian area of various tree species and water, with lots of fruiting trees and shrubs (persimmon, apple, plum, current, grape, Russian olive).

Description:

The bird was a small buteo, plump and short-winged when perched. It was an immature bird. It was smaller than a Red-tailed Hawk, being much more reminiscent of a large Cooper's Hawk, perhaps a Goshawk, in size and shape when casually observed. It "felt" like an accipiter at first glance. The relatively long wings and bulkier shape ruled out accipiters. It had yellow feet and black talons. There was a dark eye, placed well forward on the face. The bird had a small bill with yellow cere. The face showed a pale spot in front of the eye. The head was dull rufous with indistinct streaks. The crown was less streaky and darker and separated from the face by an indistinct pale supercilium. It had a lighter moustachial line. The chin, throat and breast were streaked reddish-brown. The back was dark brown and had cream colored spots on the scapulars. The tail was barely rounded when perched and was barred dark brown and off-white/tan. In flight the tail was narrowly barred dark brown and off-white and the spread primaries were vaguely barred. There was no dark patagial bar.

In flight the bird had rapid flicking flight with the wings held stiffly bowed when set. There was a pale whitish crescent in the distal wing, more obvious from above. The pale crescent was only in the primaries and did not include the flight feathers.

Similar Species:

The dark eye, white lower belly, and short tail rule out Accipiters. The broad wings and plump body indicate a Buteo. The barred tail, lack of patagial marks, and very pale wing crescent confined to the primaries eliminate all other similar species.

Experience with Species:

I have seen Red-shouldered Hawk on many occasions outside of Colorado and twice in Colorado.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

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