

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

(Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.)

rec'd 3/6/02

Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

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| CBRC FILE #: 2602-27 | | |
| RESULTS: A | | |
| Species: (Common Name) Gyrfalcon | | (Scientific Name) Falco rusticolus |
| Date(s) of occurrence: 02/20/02 & 02/25/02 | | |
| Number of birds seen: One | Sex: | Plumage: Gray Morph Adult |
| Exact location: 02/20-Highway 14 in North Park. 17 miles west of the Moose Visitor Center near mile marker 40 and near the west entrance to Owl Creek Ranches. 02/25-Main entrance to Owl Creek Ranch at mile marker 42. | | |
| County: Jackson | Nearest town: Walden | Elevation: Approx. 8,000 ft. |
| Length of observation: Total for both sightings about 10 minutes | | Time(s) of observation: On 2/20 at 2:30 p.m. & on 2/25 at 2:45 p.m. |
| Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: George Hopper | | |
| Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): | | |
| Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observers position: On 2/20: Light wind and overcast. On 2/25: Ground blizzards, snowing, 30mph winds and 6 degrees (without wind chill). | | |
| Optical equipment used: Leica 8 X 42 binocs & Swarovski Scope with 20-60 zoom | | |
| Distance to bird(s) (estimated, unless otherwise noted): Approx. 30 yards. | | |
| Was (were) bird(s) photographed? Yes | | If so, are you submitting photos? Yes |
| Who took the photograph(s)? Me | | |
| Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred: High elevation sagebrush grasslands | | |
| Describe the bird's (birds') behaviors, particularly behaviors that were used in supporting the identification, e.g., flying, feeding, habits: On 2/20 & 2/25 we found the bird sitting on a telephone pole. On 2/20: we initially drove past it and then turned around and came back parking on the side of the road with a rear view of the bird. It kept turning its head and looking at us as we sat in the car. We then drove to the front of it, parked again and looked back at it. It became nervous and flew after a short while. As it flew, it came down off the pole straight at us and then turned and flew away, gliding low over the ground with few wing beats where it eventually flew out of sight. On 2/25: We parked behind the bird. I took some very distant photographs. After turning its head and watching us for a while, it grew nervous, flew around us over the sage flats and then back east onto another telephone pole, this time behind and facing us. We drove closer and then this is when I was able to look at the bird through my scope and got the better photographs (captured video stills.) After tolerating us for a short time, it again flew off the pole and headed north over Owl Creek Ranch where we lost sight of it. | | |
| DESCRIPTION -- This is the most important part of this report. Include in these details the overall size and shape of the bird, how you placed the bird in the general group that you did, and give as many plumage details as possible, even including those that you feel might not have relevance to the specific identification. Features to include are the color(s) and/or patterns of the head, eyes, bill, back, folded wings, open wings, tail, chin, throat, breast, sides, flanks, belly, vent, and legs. Also, please include, where possible, shape of the whole bird, of the wings -- folded or open, of the bill, and of the tail. Please fill out this portion even if photos are accompanying your report. We welcome attachments of additional sheets of description, drawings, field sketches, or copies of field notes. Very large falcon shaped but buteo-sized bird with light streaking (brownish-gray) on the entire chest, spotting on the belly and barring on the flanks. From the back, the bird was grayish white with a long, barred (or banded) gray and white tail. Tail was broad at the base tapering to a narrower width at the tip. Wings only reached about 2/3 of the way down the tail. As the bird turned its head to look at us, I noted a dark eye, streaked head, darkish cheek, fairly strong moustachial stripe and yellow cere. Looking at the bird from the front, the legs were covered by feathers and not visible. Barrel chested. Crop appeared full. Undertail coverts were streaked. We saw this bird fly on three different occasions. As it came straight at us, I noted an all light underwing although I did not see the underwing long enough to distinguish any other characteristics. No dark axillaries were present. It then turned and flew away from us. From this perspective, it looked all gray from the back. The wings were falcon shaped but rather broad. No jess was visible in flight. Flight was a stiff slow wing beat. | | |
| Describe the bird's (birds') call(s) and/or song(s), if noted: | | |
| SIMILAR SPECIES -- This is another critical part of your report. Please discuss how you eliminated similar species from consideration: Peregrine Falcon: No hood. Thinner moustachial markings. All light underwing. Longer tail (or shorter wings.) It flew differently than a peregrine with a slower, stiffer wing beat. Wings were broader than a peregrine. Prairie Falcon: Larger than a prairie, wrong overall color (gray rather than brown), wrong chest and belly pattern with spotting on the belly rather than streaked all over as a prairie would be marked. Wrong head and face pattern. In flight did not have dark axillaries. Longer tail (or shorter appearing wings) than a prairie falcon. Dark cheek. | | |

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| What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? I have seen one Gyrfalcon in Colorado. The gray morph bird at Hamilton reservoir, although I saw and observed this bird well on 6 different occasions. | | |
| List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): National Geographic and A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors | | |
| This report was made from (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> notes made during observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> notes made IMMEDIATELY after observation <input type="checkbox"/> later from memory. | | |
| Date and time of written report: 02/25/02 & 03/03/02 | | |
| Reporting observer: Rachel Hopper | | Signature: |
| Reporting observer's address: 1721 Cottonwood Pt. Dr. | | |
| City: Ft. Collins | State: Co | Zip: 80524 |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Additional Comments</p> <p>I spoke with Jerry Craig (CDOW Raptor specialist) about the possibility of the Gyr being an escaped falconer's bird. Jerry checked Colorado and bordering states for reports of missing Gyrs and found none.</p> | | |

2002-27

