Photo Quiz

by
Bob Curry

The bird overhead is certainly a diurnal raptor as can be determined by the long wings and tail, and the hooked bill. Moreover, the long, comparatively slender wings, and the extremely long narrow tail eliminate most potential hawk species.

While this is clearly not a buteo shape, the underwing pattern of light wing linings and darker remiges is reminiscent of Swainson's Hawk. Finer differences in plumage details aside, Swainson's is the slimmest of our buteos but it just does not have such a long narrow tail, and the bend at the wrist is not nearly so exaggerated as on this bird.

Immature Mississippi Kite is somewhat like this in plumage but the wings are slimmer throughout and the tail, while almost but definitely not as proportionately long as this, is squared at the corners.

The combination of shape and flight behaviour even in a migrating Northern Harrier, which this bird would appear to be undertaking, render it virtually unmistakable. Migratory flight is most often a series of languid, effortless flaps followed by a long glide. Of course, the camera has frozen our bird in the middle of a glide so we are forced to examine plumage more carefully. The extent of dark mottling, spotting and barring, and the lack of "dipped-in-ink" primary tips, indicates that this is not the ghostly beautiful adult male harrier. Juvenile Northern Harriers have a very distinctive and attractive

plumage seen from about mid July through the fall. The breast and belly are a lovely clear orange, and the greater coverts and secondaries are blackish. It's a little difficult to determine the extent with certainty from the photo but the bird has some streaking on the throat, and blotches or streaks on the sides of the breast. Especially on the better illuminated left underwing, the secondaries are barred rather than being blackish. All these features point to this as an **adult female Northern Harrier.**

Both for the intellectual challenge and to gather more information about migration and populations it is important to identify and record the ages and sexes of birds.

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PUBLICATION NOTICE

A Review of the Environmental Impacts of Lead Shotshell Ammunition and Lead Fishing Weights in Canada. 1995. By *A.M. Scheuhammer* and *S.L. Norris*. Occasional Paper Number 88. Canadian Wildlife Service. Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3. No charge.

Ontario birders may find this report, which reviews the available information, from Canada and elsewhere, on the use, environmental fate, and toxicity of spent lead shot and lost lead fishing weights and discusses options for managing the negative impacts of these products, of particular interest. It notes that lead shot ingestion is probably the primary source of elevated lead exposure and poisoning in Canadian waterfowl and most other bird species. For some species (e.g. Common Loons), lead sinker ingestion is a more frequent cause of lead poisoning. Because the United States has banned the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting nationwide since 1991, Canada is now responsible for an increasingly large proportion of the lead poisoning problem in North America and may be the major continental source of migrating waterfowl that carry embedded lead shot. Lead shot ingestion also occurs in a wide variety of non-waterfowl species, including upland game birds, shorebirds, raptors, and scavengers. Where it has been explicitly studied in Canada and the United States, lead poisoning mortality of Bald and Golden eagles from eating prey animals with lead shot embedded in their tissues or the gizzards of birds with ingested lead shot accounts for an estimated 10-15% of the post-fledging mortality in these raptorial species.

In Canada, several provinces and territories are committed to phasing out the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting throughout their jurisdictions, and there will be a national ban on the use of lead shot for all migratory game bird hunting beginning in 1997. Sport anglers have been increasingly encouraged by federal and provincial/territorial enviroment departments and by several nongovernmental organizations to voluntarily use nontoxic fishing sinkers.