

## IDENTIFICATION NOTES



The bird pictured here, with its large head, big bill, huge talons and regal bearing, is most definitely a buteo. Noting the dark bib, one might first consider the adult light phase Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). However, Western Birds 12:143-144, 1981

Swainson's Hawk has a white patch over the bill, a distinct white throat and a somewhat darker bib. Looking at the bill, one can see that it is very wide, extending at the gape to the posterior edges of the eyes. The tarsi, which are more easily seen in the picture of the bird's back, are feathered all the way to the toes. This combination of feathered tarsi and large, wide bill are diagnostic of only one buteo.

The bird is a Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) in fresh first-year plumage. This plumage, totally neglected in the field guides, is described by Bent (Life histories of North American birds of prey, Part 1, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 167, 1937:288); it is retained through the first winter, but the brown tends to wear or fade from the tarsal and chest feathers, leaving a bird with virtually all white underparts.

There are two other buteos which could be confused with the first-year Ferruginous Hawk. The adult Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) exhibits a rather rare plumage variation (Cade, Condor 57:313-346, 1955) in which the belly is whitish and there may be a dark band across the chest. However, these birds retain the distinctive tail and wing pattern of the Rough-legged Hawk, i.e., the black wrist patch on the under-wing and black band at the end of the tail, and should be easily distinguishable in flight.

The first-year Ferruginous Hawk can bear a superficial resemblance to Krider's Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis krideri*). The latter, however, lacks the Ferruginous' unbarred, white-based primaries, broad bill and feathered tarsi.

These pictures were taken in the summer of 1981 on Pawnee National Grasslands, Weld Co., Colorado, by Diane Larson.

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