

Fall 1984
Iowa

Barb Wilson

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Golden Eagle 1 Nov 23, 1984
Mills County, Iowa, near Willow Slough

Description: Great big dark bird, bigger than a Buteo. So uniformly dark I thought of Golden right away. Hooked beak bluish gray, black at tip. Cere yellow. Head a lighter brown than body - crown, face, nape. (Front of forehead dark, as was an area around the eye.) Throat dark. Whole body very dark. Undertail coverts white. Toes yellow. I got a good look at the legs but couldn't tell if the feathering extended down the legs or not - I suspect this means that the legs were feathered to the toes but these feathers were light in color. Sometimes the bird turned its head + wind ruffled its feathers to reveal white down ~~at~~ ^{feather} or bases.

After 10 minutes or so, the bird took off + flew slowly SW along the Nishnabotna, soaring barely over the tree tops. From above, the bird showed white at the base of the primaries and much white at the base of the tail, with a broad dark band at the end of the tail. From ~~seen~~ underneath, it showed white at the base of both primaries + secondaries, + of course the white undertail coverts. Beautiful bird.

Viewing conditions: 20x scope, looking east at ~~at~~ about 3:30 pm. Sunny. Bird not too far for the ~~seen~~ scope. No book.

Similar species: Young Bald Eagles are similar but usually mottled with light feathers. They have white on the under wing coverts, not the bases of the flight feathers, + they do not have the neat tail pattern.

Written Nov. 28 from notes
Taken after the bird flew

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Note: I'm told a Golden Eagle was sighted at Fontenelle Forest this fall.