

200-01-1994

## Gyrfalcon

Falco rusticolis

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: January 1, 1994

Time: 11:00 to 11:55 AM

Weather: Variably cloudy ( altocunulus) southwest wind to 15 mph. visibility excellent.

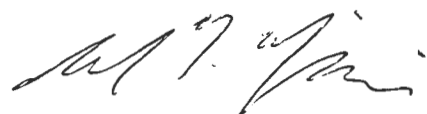
Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and Kowa TSN 4 Spotting Scope at 25X to 60X

Viewing distance: about 300 to 400 yards away

Details of sighting and description: While counting waterfowl and gulls off of Beach 11, all of the birds suddenly flew up and then settled back down moments later. After searching the sky for a raptor and not finding one, I started searching the ground and ice in the surrounding area for what may have frightened the birds. Sitting on the ice not far from Gull Point was a dark spot which after quickly putting my scope on the spot turned out to be what disturbed the birds, a grey morph Gyrfalcon. The gyrfalcon must have flown in very low possibly below the tree line for it to escape my detection upon its arrival. Most of the time it was seen standing on the ice facing me. The body was heavy and the head seemed small for the size of the bird. The upper and lower breast and belly was white with narrow brownish-gray streaking. When it turned its head a pale supercillium could be seen on an otherwise grayish face. There was a narrow dark vertical line below the eye. Part of the right wing could be seen and it was grayish. It sat in this position for about 40 to 45 minutes before it flew towards me and then banked towards the tip of Gull Point where it landed. In flight the wings were broad especially near the base and tapered to a point at the tips. The wing beats were very slow and deliberate, but the bird moved quickly. The undersides of the wings were seen briefly and the wing linings were slightly darker than the undersides of the primaries and secondaries. When it landed on the point it was broadside to me which permitted me to see the length of the tail. The tail was long and narrowly barred with the tip touching the ground most of the time. The folded primaries extended about 2/3 down the tail. From the top of the head all the way down the back was an even medium gray. My wife Linda had seen this bird about 10:50 AM in another area of the park eating a flicker. She said she was within 200 feet of the bird when it flew heading in the direction where I had discovered it.

I have seen 4 of the 6 Gyrfalcons that have been seen in Erie County and have also seen Gyrfalcon in Ontario Canada.



## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

Date of Sighting: 1 January 1994 to 1 January 1994

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 1994

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: YES Photo: NO Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella			X					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
J. Skinner			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*J C Haas*

Date:

7-25-94