

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2015-10-06 15:19:37
Observer's Name	David Barber
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Phone	570-943-3411
Observer's Address	Street Address: Acopian Center for Conservation Learning Street Address Line 2: 410 Summer Valley Road City: Orwigsburg State / Province: PA Postal / Zip Code: 17961 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	Pablo Santoja
Species (Common Name)	Swainson's Hawk
Species (Scientific Name)	Buteo swainsonii
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	immature, light morph
Observation Date and Time	10-04-2015 2:30 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Not yet (please do, eBird is great!)
County	Schuylkill
Location (City, Borough, Township)	East Brunswick
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	North Lookout, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
GPS coordinates of sighting	N 40.641683, W 75.991509
Habitat	Rock escarpment on ridge top
Distance to bird	50-60 meter
Viewing conditions	clear day, sunny
Optical equipment used	Swarovski EL 8.5x42 binoculars

Description

Head was light colored, back wings were brown, tail was brown with narrow banding, a narrow white rump patch. Underneath, belly and breast were cream colored with brown streaking on the sides of the breast, under wing coverts were cream colored with darker (grayish) flight feathers.

The bird was Buteo shaped with a short broad tail and broad wings. When gliding the wings appeared very narrow and pointed and when soaring the wings were broader midwing but still appeared pointed at the end of the wing. More narrow and pointed than a red-tailed, broad-winged or red-shouldered hawk. I

Initially bird glided with wrists thrust forward giving an "M" shape similar to an osprey, when soaring held wings in a shallow dihedral, primaries were spread, but still gave the end of the wing a pointy appearance.

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

The bird was initially seen gliding past below eye level with a group of 5-6 turkey vultures. It then began soaring in an updraft with the vultures for approximately 30 seconds before it continued gliding out of sight.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

The two toned underwing of light underwing coverts and darker flight feathers separates it from other buteos. It did not have a red tail like an adult red-tailed hawk and it did not have light panels in the wings like immature red-tailed, broad-winged, rough-legged and ferruginous hawks. Separated from adult rough-legged hawk by two toned underwing and lacked dark carpal patches and belly band of roughleg. This bird was larger than a peregrine falcon and wings and tail were too broad, peregrines also do not have white rump patches. Separated from northern harrier by larger size, two toned underwing, light streaking (female harrier would have more streaking throughout the breast and belly), narrower white rump patch, and shorter broader tail. Separated from osprey by smaller size and did not have a black eye line, ospreys also lack a white rump patch.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes, I am very familiar with this species. I have seen hundreds of Swainson's hawks during migration at Veracruz, Mexico, often soaring with multiple species. The two-toned underwing of light underwing coverts and darker flight feathers is unmistakable.

After

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