

## LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

CRESTED CARACARA, *Caracara plancus*

Peter H. Yaukey

November 27, 1999, chenier south of Garner Ridge, west of Johnson's Bayou, Cameron Parish.

As I was working the south edge of Garner Ridge, headed westward at about noon, with a team of birders in and across the chenier to my north, I spotted a large dark bird moving east over the ridge to my south, 45 degrees to the southwest of me. There were no clouds. The bird was gliding with some wing motion- either banks or lazy flaps. After several seconds, the bird materialized into an obvious caracara. Relative to other raptors, the wings were long, had a pronounced angle at the wrist, and were lobe-handed (ie broad-tipped), and bowed. The bird's overall size was large- approximately that of a vulture. The underside of the primaries was whitish, with black tips, trailing and leading edges. Otherwise the bird had entriely black wings, body, tail, and head except perhaps some pale visible on the head. The lighting conditions would make me expect only bold white marks to be visible, accounting for the dark-looking tail. The bird had a hefty head/neck and tail extension fore and aft of the wings. It was in the binocs about 40 seconds. I called to Phillip Wallace, Mac Myers, and Curt Sorrells, but the caracara drifted below the woodline just before they arrived. I watched fifteen minutes continuously for it to rise back above the trees, without success. The bird had been 150 meters away, moving ESE, about 40 feet above the ground. I was using 8x40 Nikon Classic Eagle binoculars.

The above account is based closely on notes originally written at 11:00-12:00 PM on the day of the sighting (see attached notes). The attached drawing was made at the same time. The features that separate this from Osprey are the black underside of the body and inner wings, and the different shape; although Osprey also has bowed wings and relatively broad wingtips, I have seen tons of them and this bird was clearly not an Osprey, both by shape and blackness (even considering the light). Black Vulture has completely different overall shape and wing positioning. I have seen Crested Caracaras before in Mexico, Venezuela, Florida, and Texas- perhaps 25 or more. I did not consult any references before writing the account on the day of observation.

I am sure of the observation.

Peter Yaukey 1/24/00

