

*Louisiana Ornithological Society's*

**Louisiana Bird Records Committee**

**Report Form**

1. **English and Scientific Names:** White-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albicaudatus*)
2. **Number of individuals, sexes, ages, etc.** One (1) adult; sex unknown.
3. **Locality:** Louisiana, Jefferson Davis parish, ca. 1/4 mi south of BFI landfill located ca. 1 mi north of Interstate-10 and ca. 2mi west of the Welsh exit.
4. **Date observed:** 27 November 1999
5. **Time observed:** 4:20-4:45 P.M. (16:20-16:45hrs)
6. **Reporting observer & address:** Bill Fontenot, Lafayette Natural History Museum,  
637 Girard Park Dr., Lafayette, LA 70503
7. **Other observers who also identified the bird:** Paul Conover
8. **Other observers who independently id'd the bird:** N/A
9. **Light conditions:** bright mid/late-afternoon winter sun over our left shoulders or to our backs as we viewed the bird to our north and/or east-northeast.
10. **Optical Equipment:** Leica 10X50 binocular; Kowa 77mm scope
11. **Distance to bird:** 50-300'
12. **Duration of observation:** ca. 25 minutes
13. **Habitat:** flat agricultural lands for many miles around; occasional water in the form of artificial "borrow" pits.
14. **Behavior of the bird/circumstances of observation:** please see attached account
15. **Description:** please see attached account

**16. Voice:** N/A

**17. Similar species:** To my knowledge, no other North American *Buteo* exhibits a combination of slate-gray upperparts, rusty-colored "shoulder blaze", white underparts, and white tail with prominent black sub-terminal band. Nearest competitor, I suppose, would be adult Harris' Hawk; but that species/age possesses dark-brown upper and underparts, with a much longer white tail (when perched, wingtips cover 50% or less of tail) and a much wider black subterminal band (covering at least 40% of the tail).

**18. Photos or tape recordings?** Extensive perched and in-flight video by Paul Conover; not attached to this report.

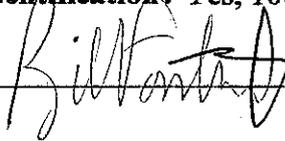
**19. Previous experience w/species:** Fairly extensive in lower Texas coastal plain, plus 2 encounters (1 adult, 1 juvenal) within the southwest Louisiana coastal plain.

**20. Identification aids:** Wheeler & Clark's North American Raptors, after observation.

**21. This description was written from:** Notes made during the observation; sketches after the observation; attached.

**22. Are you positive of your identification?** Yes; 100% positive.

**23. Signature of reporter:** \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Fort", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

**Notes Regarding the Observation of an Adult White-tailed Hawk  
Jefferson Davis Parish, Louisiana, 27 November 1999**

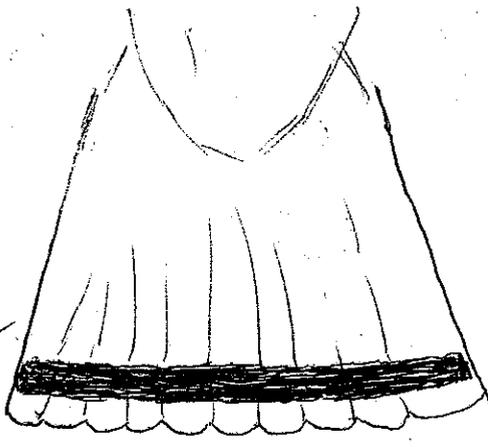
On the afternoon of 27 Nov 1999, Paul Conover and I drove to the BFI landfill located ca. 1 mi north of Interstate-10, ca. 2 mi west of the Welsh exit. As we approached the landfill, we observed a large hawk with all ivory-white underparts perched (facing us) on a utility line. Even from a distance, the hawk's size and shape impressed us as being notably larger and bulkier than that of the many Red-tailed Hawks which we had studied that day. As our vehicle got to within 100 yds of the bird, I commented that looked like "a penguin perched on a wire." Eventually we parked almost immediately beneath the hawk, and viewed it through binoculars - while still in the vehicle - from a distance of ca. 50'. Paul immediately identified it as a White-tailed Hawk. I made no comment one way or the other. During this encounter, I noted long, bare, yellow-orange legs, and long folded wings which substantially exceeded the tip of its rather short, folded tail. The sunlight shown brightly on the bird's underparts, which I judged to be very slightly off-white in color; and concolor from chin down through lower belly except for a small area of fine, horizontal, grayish barring at the upper sides of the breast. The bird's hooked bill was dark, with yellow cere, and its base was surrounded with white plumage. Its head was lead-gray. Eye color was not noted.

After only a minute or so, Paul got out of the vehicle to retrieve his video camera. As soon as he had it in hand, a farm truck pulled up next to ours, causing the hawk to flush. Paul videoed as I got out of our vehicle. In the air, the bird displayed its notably short tail which was bright-white in color, and possessed a prominent black sub-terminal band which I judged to be ca. 1" in width. In flight, it consistently held its wings above the horizontal plane, with its wingtips splayed to an even greater degree above horizontal. Its wings were obviously proportionately longer and more pointed than those of a Red-tailed; and actually resembled those of a Swainson's Hawk, in shape. As it wheeled toward a nearby utility pole (ca. 100 yds to our east-northeast), I noted its upperparts - which looked to be concolor lead to slate-gray) - and bright rusty-colored lesser primary coverts. By this time I was also certain that we were looking at an adult White-tailed Hawk.

After the hawk landed on the utility pole, Paul trained his spotting scope/video rig on it, and filmed it for the next few minutes. Looking through the rig, I noted that the bird's dorsal plumage was indeed concolor lead-gray in color; and that its mantle and tertial feathers were narrowly pale-edged.

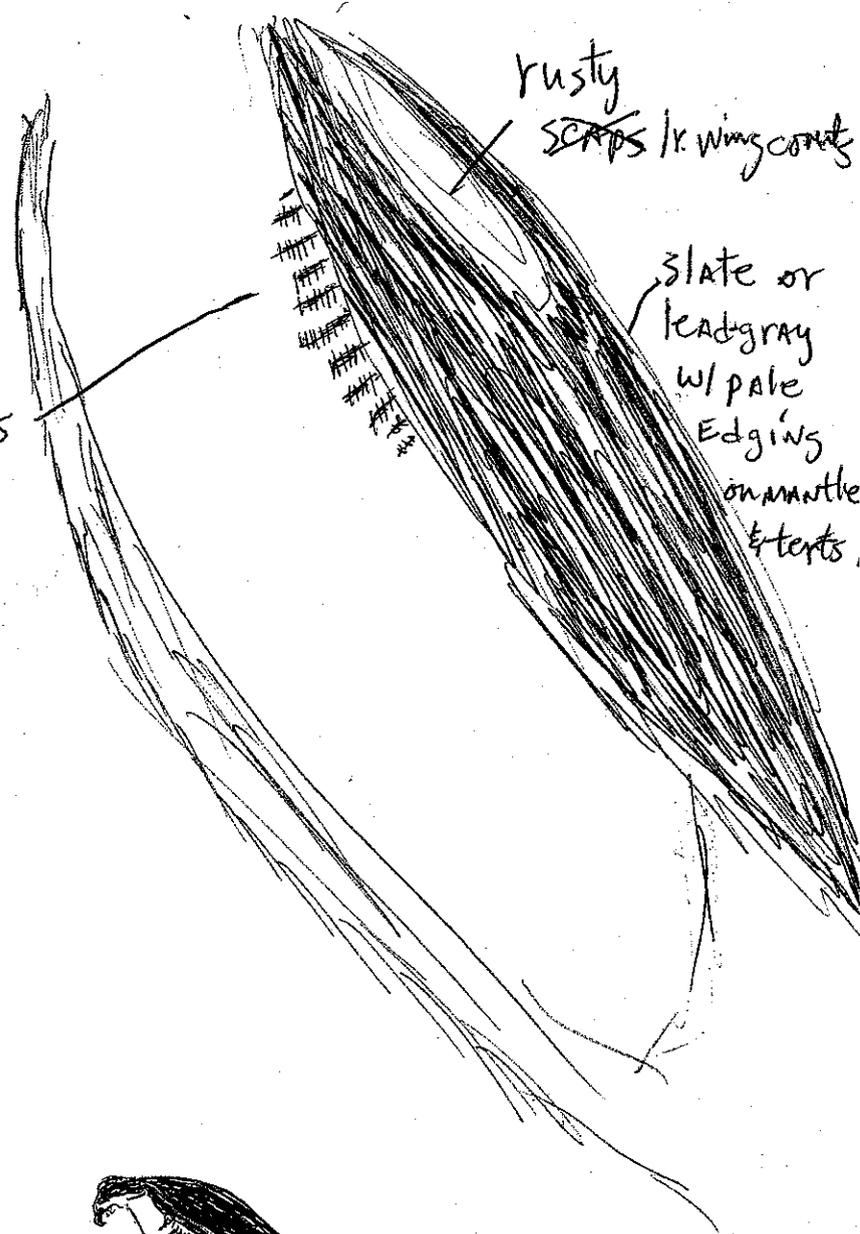
From that position (the bird had lit with its back to us, and never changed its position) we were able to study the bird's head and upperparts at leisure for at least 15-20 minutes, at which time I took notes and double-checked them against Paul's running commentary as he alternately filmed and viewed the bird.

Written on 02 December 1999, and submitted on 03 December 1999  
Bill Fontenot, Acadiana Park Nature Station, Lafayette, LA



Short, white tail with prominent black sub-terminal band

EXTENT of barring at sides



rusty SCAPs / r. wing coverts

slate or lead-gray w/ pale Edging on mantle & tert.



wings held above horizontal w/ even more upward flare at primary tips;

pointed wingtips - somewhat like Swainson's hawk



Wings longer than tail

small head, large body, short tail ≡ "watermelon"-bodied appearance

ca 2.5 mi  
NW of Welsh Spit  
Jeff Davis Landfill

4120 PM SAT. 27 Nov 1999

Adult WT Hawk

pure white underparts

horiz. barred sides

slate gray above w/ chestnut smudging at shoulders

short white tail; prominent blackish subterminal band

when perched, Primaries overhung tail greatly

big bodied; barrel chested look

in flight → sharp-tipped wing look; sort of like a Swainson's  
primary tips black

held wings ≡ ≡ uptilted slightly → just above horizontal

long, ≡ ≡ orange/yellow legs; large feet  
exposed tarsi

white chin

pale-buff edged mantle feathers  
tertials

when perched, large body/short tail resulted in  
very robust "watermelon" shape  
or "penguin"

white underparts shone brightly in late afternoon sun  
on the 2 perches we saw the hawk use, both were  
utility lines, not poles or

**REPORT TO THE  
LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE**

1. Common and scientific name:  
White-tailed Hawk, *Buteo albicaudatus*
2. Number of individuals seen, sexes, ages, general plumage, etc.  
One adult bird
3. Locality:  
Just west of Landfill Rd., between a large landfill near Welsh, LA, and I-10.
4. Date(s) when seen:  
January 5, 2000
5. Times of day when seen:  
About 4:30 PM
6. Reporting observer and address:  
John P. Sevenair, 325 Stafford Place, New Orleans, LA 70124
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird:  
Nancy Newfield, Christie Riehl
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird:  
Many birders have reported seeing a White-tailed Hawk at this location over the past few years.
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and amount of light):  
The day was clear and the bird was in the sun. The angle between the bird and the sun was about 30 degrees, so our view was not as clear as it could have been; the bird was largely silhouetted.
10. Optical equipment:  
Zeiss 7x42 binoculars.  
Swift scope with a zoom eyepiece (exact magnification not known, but probably 20x or so).
11. Distance to bird:  
About 200 yards
12. Duration of observation:  
About 5 minutes
13. Habitat (general and specific):  
The bird was perched on a power line above fallow fields crossed by occasional lines of brush. The Welsh landfill is about a mile to the north.
14. Behavior (flying, feeding, resting, etc.; include and stress any habits used in identification):  
The bird was standing on the wire and occasionally preening.
15. Description (Include what was actually seen, not what should have been seen. Include if possible: total length; body bulk; shape, bill, eye, and leg characteristics; color and pattern of plumage, etc.)  
This was a large bird, comparable in size and similar in shape to a Red-tailed Hawk on the other side of the road. It was a raptor, and appeared to be a *Buteo*, in other words. The beak appeared to be smaller relative to the head than the beak of the Red-tailed. The head was dark in color (probably gray--the light wasn't good for color determination), except for the throat, which was white. The breast was white and what we could see of the back was dark (the bird was mostly facing toward us, and our view of the back was limited). The legs were relatively long, and appeared to be yellow (again, the light wasn't good for color determination).

The tail, seen from below, was white with a black band. The tail was short; the wings extended at least an inch or two beyond the tail.

16. Voice:  
Not heard
17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observations):  
The area is a Mecca for Red-tailed Hawks with unusual plumages. The short tail relative to wing length and the details of the plumage noted above should eliminate this species, though I'm far from being an expert on the variations of Red-tails.
18. Photographs:  
None were taken.
19. Previous experience with this species:  
I've seen a few of them in Texas, and saw a bird that was probably the same individual in the same location in late 1995.
20. Aids: List books, illustrations, birders, etc. used in identification
  - a) At the time of observation:  
We discussed the ID among ourselves, and consulted The National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, third edition.
  - b) After observation:  
The National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, third edition.
21. This description written from:  Notes made during observation;  notes made after observation;  memory.  
A copy of the notes is enclosed.
22. Are you positive of your identification?  yes If not, explain:
23. Signature of reporter:
  
24. Date and time of writing this account:  
The first draft was finished on January 5, 2000, at about 10:40 PM. Minor modifications were made later in the same evening.

Kristi Riehl, Bland  
4:30 PM Swift scope  
Power lines s of Cl to  
Welsh land fill Rd to  
Chunky hawk w. 2 to 3  
smallish bill - white  
front, uniform dark  
back, wings 1-2"  
longer than tail,  
sitting on power  
line preening  
gray head white  
throat, long legs  
tail white sym below  
w black band near  
end

## Louisiana Ornithological Society's

## LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## Report Form

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review (to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for). Attach additional pages as necessary. Please print or type. Attach xerox of field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216.

1. English and Scientific names: WHITE-TAILED HAWK, *Buteo albicaudatus*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage): 1, ADULT
3. Locality: LOUISIANA: JEFFERSON DAVIS  
(parish)  
LANDFILL ROAD, ~ 1 MILE NORTH OF I-10  
(specific locality)
4. Date(s) when observed: 11 DECEMBER 1999
5. Time(s) of day when observed: ~ 6:45-7:15 A.M.
6. Reporting observer and address:  
JOSEPH P. KLEIMAN  
15913 MALVERN HILL  
BATON ROUGE, LA 70817
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird(s):  
DAVID ROARK, MARK SWAN, BRIAN MILLER
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):  
BIRD ORIGINALLY FOUND BY PAUL CONOVER
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): EARLY MORNING LIGHT - WE OFTENS AW BIRD WITH SUN AT OUR BACK
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition):  
ZEISS 10X40, GOOD
11. Distance to bird(s):  
~ 75-150 YDS
12. Duration of observation:  
~ 30 MINUTES
13. Habitat:  
LARGE, OPEN FIELDS WITH OCCASIONAL SMALL SHRUBS

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):

BIRD FIRST SEEN PERCHED ON A POWER LINE POLE CROSS MEMBER. WHEN FLUSHED IT FLEW TO S.E. AND PERCHED ON A SMALL BUSH. IT FLEW BACK TO THE POWER LINES AND LANDED TO THE EAST ON ANOTHER POLE. IN FLIGHT, BIRD FLEW WITH FLAPPING, THEN GLIDED WITH WINGS HELD IN A DIHEDRAL

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen; include if possibly: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species, body bulk, shape, proportions, bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species):

A LARGE BUTED, ESSENTIALLY GRAYISH ABOVE, WHITE BELOW, EXCEPT FOR TAIL WHICH WAS WHITE WITH A DARK TERMINAL BAND. THE WINGS, AT REST, EXTENDED BEYOND THE TAIL. YOU COULD SEE THE WHITE TAIL BETWEEN THE FOLDED WINGS. IN FLIGHT, THE WINGS UNDERNEATH WERE WHITE WITH DARK FLIGHT FEATHERS WHICH FORMED A DARK, TRAILING EDGE TO WINGS. UPPER WINGS SHOWED ~~A~~ DARK SHOULDER PATCHES (COULD NOT GET COLOR) DARK CHEEKS WERE NOTICED (ALMOST LIKE PEREGRINE) BUT BROADER AND NOT SHARP

16. Voice: NOT HEARD

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

SHORT-TAILED HAWK IS SMALLER, WHITE TAIL DOESN'T HAVE TERMINAL BAND SWAINSON'S HAWK HAS DARK BIB, AND DIFF TAIL PATTERN

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): YES, MARK GOT SOME VIDEO AND BRIAN AND I GOT SOME PHOTOS. I WILL SUBMIT MINE AFTER THEY ARE DEVELOPED.

19. Previous experience with this species:

SEEN A FAIR NUMBER OF TIMES IN TEXAS, I ALSO SAW THE 1ST SIGHTING OF THIS BIRD SEVERAL SPECIES YEARS AGO AT THIS SAME LOCATION. I THINK IT IS LIKELY THAT THIS IS SAME BIRD AS BEFORE

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: NONE

b. after observation: CLARK & WHEELER

21. This description is written from: \_\_\_ notes made during the observation (\_\_\_ notes attached?); \_\_\_ notes made after the observation (date: \_\_\_); \_\_\_  memory.

22. Are you positive of your identification if not, explain: YES

23. Signature of reporter: Joseph P. Kleiman 12 DEC 1999 5:00 PM  
(date) (time)

Species: WHITE-TAILED HAWK

State: LOUISIANA

Parish or  
County: JEFFERSON DAVIS

Locality: ~1 MILE WEST OF LANDFILL RD.

Date: 15 JANUARY ~~2000~~ No. seen: 1

Observers: JOE KLEIMAN, DAVE ROARK

Documentation: sight record (  ); photo (    ); specimen (    ); heard only (    )

Significance: SAW IT ABOUT 5:10 P.M. BIRD WAS TOO

FAR AWAY TO SEE MUCH EXCEPT THAT THE

WINGS EXTENDED BEYOND WHITE TAIL. ~~WE~~ WE

HAVE SEEN THIS SAME LOOK WHEN BIRD HAS

For unusual records, give details on reverse side

BEEN MUCH CLOSER, RARE BIRD REPORT SUBMITTED

OVER

FOR PREVIOUS OBSERVATION ON 11 DEC. 99

Species: White-tailed Hawk

State: LA Parish or County: Jefferson Davis

Locality: Welsh, on Landfill Rd.

Date: 31 Jan. ~~to~~ 2000 No. seen: 1 ad.

Observers: Richard L. (Rick) Knight

Documentation: sight record ( X ); photo ( ); specimen ( ); heard only ( )

Significance: reported by others; had been present several weeks

For unusual records, give details on reverse side

large Buteo;

tail white, with black sub-terminal band;

gray upperparts, particularly noticeable on head;

white underparts, faint bars on flanks