

LBRC Report Form

1. English and Scientific names: Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
1 subadult
3. Parish:
Morehouse
4. Specific Locality:
Mollicy unit of Upper Ouachita NWR
5. Date(s) when observed: 3 January, 2024
6. Time(s) of day when observed: 1:15pm
7. Reporting observer: John Dillon
8. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird(s):
Gerry Click
9. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
Arthur Liles (he thought he had seen the bird in the same area about an hour earlier)
10. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Mostly sunny. Bird was in good light; when seen best, it was soaring/circling SE of us, and the sun was behind us.
11. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Swarovski 12x50 bins, new.
12. Distance to bird(s): Just over a quarter mile.
13. Duration of observation: View through bins was less than 10 seconds (see below).
14. Habitat: South end of Mollicy, so mixture of open, grassy fields and ag fields.
15. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):
Soaring/circling.
16. Description (include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen; include if possible: 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):

Gerry and I were heading south on Kelby Road with Arthur Liles driving in his truck behind us. Gerry saw the bird and said he assumed it was a Turkey Vulture, but I stopped anyway. I had the window down and looked at the bird in bins, and I saw a very large raptor flying with wings in a dihedral and it was facing toward us as it circled. When it turned to our right, I knew it was not a Turkey Vulture because the underside was mostly all dark and did not have the obvious contrast between body feathers and flight feathers. As the bird continued in the circle, it began to turn to our left, and I could see the dorsal side, and the basal half of the tail was noticeably pale/white. The tail was also held open and was more broad than TUVU, especially at the distal end, and it was noticeably wedge shaped. Wings remained in a dihedral at every part of the circle. I could not see any white on the dorsal side of the wings, but at that distance it's a pretty small area. Gerry had stepped out to get a view, and I told him to get back in because it was a Golden, and we needed to drive closer to get pics. We drove a quarter mile, I grabbed the camera and got out, and just as soon as I got the camera zoomed in on the bird, which was then facing away from us, the bird kept moving directly away from us and disappeared in seconds. We scanned the sky for probably 15 minutes and then drove the only road heading east to try to get it there but had no luck. Arthur did not see the bird at all during this, but he was reasonably sure he had seen it earlier and had commented earlier about it.

17. Voice: N/A

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

TUVU eliminated because of shorter, wider tail, white on dorsal side of tail, and lack of obviously paler flight feathers. Also, this was only a quarter mile, and I was using 12x50 bins, and I was expecting to see a TUVU; I would have noticed the head shape/size of TUVU in addition to the other features. Subadult BAEA is eliminated because of the wedge-shaped tail and overall wing structure. BAEA hold their wings straight and flat. This bird simply did not have the wings of BAEA, and it was very noticeable. The winds that day were calm, and I don't think they would have been anywhere strong enough to make a BAEA's wings unsteady enough to remain in a dihedral instead of staying flat. Overall, I was unobservant of the head size of the bird because of the quick view and distance, and because the tail and wings clinched it for me right off. I assumed I would get photos, but I think we drove so fast and jumped out and spooked it into leaving.

19. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):

Nope

20. Previous experience with this species: Seen at Mollicy at least twice prior. Also out west a number of times. Obviously seen thousands of TUVU and many dozen BAEA or all ages.

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

Sibley later on to see how large white dorsal areas on wings are.

22. Identification aids used when?

After observation

23. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain:

Yes. I'm confident, but I'm not sure if this will pass because of the short duration of the sighting. Regardless, I want it to be in the historical record.

24. Date report completed:

7 January, 2024.

25. May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page?

Yes

26. If yes, may we include your name with the report?

Yes