

Utah Rare Bird Report

SPECIES: Common Black-Hawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus*)

DATE: 5 May 1995 (1 bird) and 4 August 1995 (2 birds)

LOCATION: Beaver Dam Wash, Washington Co., Utah. About ¼ mile n. of Lytle Ranch Preserve north boundary.

REPORTING OBSERVER: Steve Summers, 2146 N. Chandler Dr., Cedar City, UT 84720

OTHER OBSERVER(S): Priscilla Summers (5/5), Jim Carlson (8/4).

DESCRIPTION: A buteo shaped hawk, chunkier than a Red-tailed Hawk or any other local species of Buteos. The entire body plumage was black. The tail was black with one wide white band roughly through the middle and a very narrow white tip. The bill was yellow noticeably standing out from the face. The legs and feet were also yellow and quite conspicuous. In flight the wings were very broad with small white patches near the tip. The tail in flight was short and broad. Both birds called which was unlike any local Buteo I'm familiar with.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILAR SPECIES: All dark phases of local Buteos (Red-tailed, Ferruginous, or Swainson's) can be eliminated by the wide white tail band. The bright yellow bill, legs and feet are also unlike any local buteo. These birds were much too broad winged and short tailed for any local species. Perhaps the most similar possibility would be the Zone-tailed Hawk. The much slimmer winged Zone-tailed has at least two white tail bands, is longer tailed, and flies and resembles a Turkey Vulture with its two toned underwings. These birds did not show a two-toned underwing pattern and had white patches near the tip. The Black-Hawk more resembles a Black Vulture.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF OBSERVATION: On 29 March 1995 I found two adult Common Black-Hawks near the mouth of Beaver Dam Wash, Mohave Co., Arizona. I observed these birds for quite some time that afternoon as they perched in cottonwoods along the wash and soared over the town of Beaver Dam. I last saw them as I was driving away through the town. They were soaring very high up and gradually heading up the wash. In April I heard that two Black-Hawks were being seen in Utah at the Lytle Ranch Preserve further up Beaver Dam Wash.

On 5 May 1995 Priscilla (my wife) and I searched for Black-Hawks at Lytle Ranch Preserve and saw one adult bird about ¼ mile north of the northern boundary of Lytle Ranch Preserve. We heard the bird first and then found it. It was sitting in a tree near what looked like a suitable nest. At that time we took quick looks then backed out. The bird was fairly excited and we didn't want to disturb it if it was nesting. We did not see any bird on the nest.

On 4 August 1995 a friend (Jim Carlson) from Oregon and I returned to look for the Black-Hawk. We found the bird, again by call first, in the exact location Priscilla and I had seen it in May. Shortly we realized there were two birds. They were both anxious about our being there and were quite vocal about it. This time I had my camera and was able to get some photos. I believe I have pictures of both birds. They were flying around quite a lot going in and out of view among the trees so it was difficult to keep them straight. The far away perched photo is the first bird we saw. The two closer perched photos I'm not sure of, but I believe they are of the second bird. The flight photo is the second bird. Both birds became more agitated the closer we were to the nest Priscilla and I found in May and which I refound this trip. We could not see anything or any movement in the nest which was about 20 ft up. We also searched the ground under and around the nest hoping to find some evidence of nesting but found nothing. I took one photo of the nest. We also looked for fledglings or immature birds around the area but again nothing.

Steve Summers