

Gyr Falcon at Clinton Lake, De Witt County

The morning of 25 February 1995, I was observing the large collection of ducks and gulls gathered on the ice near the power station at Clinton Lake, De Witt County. This has always been a good spot to observe early migrant ducks and the rarer gulls. As usual, the adult Great Black-backed Gull that had been present since January was standing out on the ice.

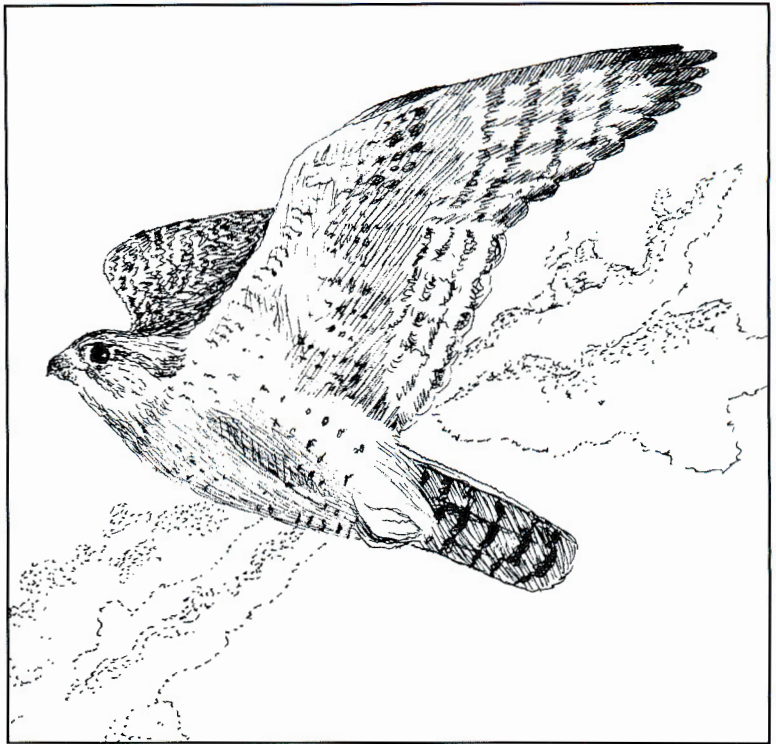
At about 8:30 a.m., all of the ducks and gulls, including the Great Black-backed Gull, flushed as one. This usually meant that an eagle was flying overhead. However, I could not see any raptors and an eagle would have been very visible. At that point, I speculated about the possibility of a fast-moving Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*).

Sure enough, a few minutes later, a large falcon came by. But this was no peregrine! I was immediately impressed by its size - larger than any of the gulls, except the great black-backed. Its size, heavy build, very broad-based, two-toned wings, and slight facial pattern identified this bird as a Gyr Falcon (*F. rusticolus*). The overall gray-brown color indicated that it was an immature. As I watched, it made amazingly rapid progress with seemingly little effort as it flew eastward past the power plant.

I notified the central Illinois birding community even though the bird appeared to be on the move. I thought perhaps it would at least be found somewhere else near Clinton Lake. While no one was able to find it the next day, Myrna Deaton discovered it on 4 March at the east end of the lake, near a major concentration of ducks, geese, and gulls.

On 5 March, Dick Sandburg, Kevin Richmond, and I observed the Gyr Falcon harassing a Great Horned Owl. The Gyr Falcon then flew out over the lake and returned to a perch. It offered us an opportunity to observe it for about 15 minutes at close range (less than 50 yards) through telescopes as it rested and preened before resuming its patrol of the lake.

My last view of the Gyr Falcon as I headed toward Farmer City half an hour later was of it chasing a flock of Canada Geese across a field. Although it forced the



Gyr Falcon drawing by Brian K. Willis.

geese to the ground, it showed no further interest, having proved its dominance.

Robert T. Chapel,
306 1/2 W. California, Urbana, Ill. 61801

Courtship in Subadult Bald Eagles in Mason County

Aerial courtship displays sometimes spectacular, are well known in the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), especially in late winter or early spring when migrating or at feeding areas (e.g., De Vore 1993, Ehrlich, Dobkin and Wheye 1988, Stokes and Stokes 1989). Aerial displays involving 20 to 30 individuals, predominantly subadults, were common in the central Illinois River valley in January and February 1995. Eagles in subadult plumage were numerous throughout winter in this area (Chautauqua NWR Christmas count had 41 immatures and 37 adults). Here I report an instance of courting behavior involving eagles in subadult plumage that was initiated on the ground in a harvested cornfield.

On 1 February 1995 at 9:45 a.m. while traveling west on a blacktop road near the entrance to the Forbes