

Sunday, April 4 at 1 O'clock, while driving through Slemon Park to Hanger 8 I observed a low flying hawk crossing the road. Fortunately, it decided to rest on a snow drift in the middle of the grain field. This allowed me to back up to get a better look through the binoculars at a distance of about 300 feet.

The bird was perched in an upright position, falcon like silhouette, uniform grayish in appearance. After 2 minutes it took off flying low over the grain stubble at about 3 feet height. It crossed the road about 150 feet in front of the car 3 feet above the pavement. It gave me an excellent side-on view of the bird.

The head was "tucked in" between the bend of the wings. The upper body was a gray colour, the underparts were a lighter colour. The wingtips were darker, not pitch black, and no sharp straight demarcation. The wingtips were pointed. The tail appeared long with no distinguishing marks. The wing beat was strong, not rapid, and no gliding was observed. The bird continued its flight over the stubble field on the other side of the road, across the runway out of sight.

I did not recognize the bird. I knew it was not a Kestrel or Peregrine Falcon. The colouration, wing beat, and size did not match. This bird was larger but not as large as other hawks and it did not have broad wings with fingerlike tip feathers of other hawks I have seen. The picture of a kite in Peterson's Field Guide came to mind.

It was not until I came home and checked the field guide that I realized that I had seen a Gyrfalcon, a bird described as "a rare Arctic visitor". Prince Edward Island Field Checklist of Birds rates it "O" - occasionally, seen only 1 to 9 times per decade.

ENVIRONMENTAL CALENDAR

- Nov. 27 - The Island Nature Trust Seeds of Conservation fund-raiser will be held between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the Farmer's Market in Charlottetown, Eptek in Summerside, Bud & Connie Ings' home in Montague, Main St. Plaza in Souris, Red Rooster in Crapaud, and Lorne MacDougald's home in Alberton.
- Nov. 27 - There will be a riparian zone workshop at the Dutch Inn in North River sponsored by the Watershed Improvement/Recreational Fisheries Development Program and the Community Watershed Improvement Coalition. For more information contact Kate MacQuarrie at 855-2360.
- Dec. 7 - Natural History Society meeting featuring a slide show on the Galapagos by Diane Griffin and Jackie Waddell. The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. at the Farm Centre on University Avenue.
- Dec. 18 - The National Park Christmas Bird Count will be held. Contact Dan McAskill at 569-4351 (evenings) if you wish to participate. There will be a pot luck at lunch at the Dalvay Shelter. See article on page 12.
- Dec. 27 - The Hillsborough Christmas Bird Count and participants pot-luck will be the days big natural history event. (see page 12)
- Dec. 28 - The Montague Christmas Bird Count will be held. Contact Gary Schneider at 838-2678 and see article on page 12.
- Jan. 4 - The Annual General Meeting of the NHSPEI Ltd. will commence 7:30 p.m. at the Farm Centre on University Avenue This evening is Member's Night and will be a sharing of stories, slides, artifacts, or anything else in natural history that might be of interest. Approximately 5 minutes will be available for each member's presentation.