

Name That Bird by Mark Pendleton

*We have MVAS member Sara Kay to thank for the photos that appear in this iteration of **NTB**. She deserves special recognition for her dedication to keeping us supplied with photos to post and discuss here. Thank you so much, Sara!*



#1



#2 (standing)



#2 (sitting)



#3



#4



#5

*****Spoiler Alert*** ***Spoiler Alert*** ***Spoiler Alert*** ***Spoiler Alert*****

The correct identifications of the birds in the five photos above is revealed below. If you want to identify them for yourself, you will need to do so before reading any further.

One of the joys of birding is doing it with other birders. More eyes can potentially see more birds; more ears, potentially hear more. Group members will also probably use different field guides so everyone can benefit from comparing how each one treats the species seen/heard. Identifying less common birds often then becomes a free-wheeling discussion to which everyone contributes, resulting in much more fun and increased accuracy.

It works the same on our panel. If only one birder gave their input, you'd get just a third of the value you do now. And, if the panelists always agreed on their IDs, it would be boring. As you can see below, that's not the case here. Besides, with a panel backing me up, I don't have to write as much myself.

8/13/2022 Initial Impressions from NTB panelists

Photo # 1

Panelist 1: Golden Eagle

Panelist 2: Swainson's Hawk

Panelist 3: Golden Eagle

Photo # 2

Panelist 1: Juvenile Great Blue Heron

Panelist 2: Green Heron

Panelist 3: Juvenile Great Blue Heron

We'll submit these photos to our duo of outside experts (Nancy Stotz and Dave Griffin) for a decision and let you know the results. Meanwhile, please feel free to weigh in via email with your opinion as well at either sidwebb@gmail.com or mpndltn@gmail.com.

Photo # 3

Panelist 1: House Sparrow

Panelist 2: House Sparrow

Panelist 3: Male House Sparrow

Photo # 4

Panelist 1: Red-tailed Hawk

Panelist 2: Red-tailed Hawk

Panelist 3: Red-tailed Hawk

Photo # 5

Panelist 1: Turkey Vulture

Panelist 2: Juvenile Turkey vulture

Panelist 3: Turkey Vulture

Now, for a little more on the two photos on which our panelists were not unanimous. The panelists don't actually meet physically to discuss their identifications, but do it by email. So, when panelist 2 read the emails from the other panelists, they looked at allaboutbirds.org from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and consulted David Allen Sibley's ***The Sibley Guide to Birds*** (first edition) as well as studying the photos again to see what they missed.

Photo 2

We'll discuss photos 2 first, since it's the easier one. Panelist 2 told me that another birder who also saw photo 2 told them that they thought it was a Green Heron. They also told me that three factors stood out for them when they looked at Great Blue Heron and Green Heron on the website and in the book and compared that with the photo. First, the dark crown on the head; second, the lack of reddish streaking on the neck; and third, the length of the bill (much longer than the width of the head) all characteristics that would point to a juvenile Great Blue Heron.

When panelist 2 studied the photo again they also noticed two things they said they should have caught the first time. **1)** On first inspection, our panelist said they figured the bird was sitting on the

ground with its legs drawn up under it—even though such behavior seemed most *unheron-like*! **2)** Then, upon returning to the photo and staring some more, there *were* legs after all! Panelist 2 admitted to feeling rather silly for not catching them the first time, but there it is: sometimes people miss stuff!

So, there are two salutary take aways from this. **1)** Approach each ID with an open mind. **2)** Be thorough and don't rush through your ID. It was actually panelist 2 who came up with the takeaways and said they would have come up with a correct ID as well if they had followed them.

As the upshot of all this, Dave's and Nancy's (our outside experts) work is halved since panelist 2 withdraws their identification of GRHE and concurs with the others that this is indeed a juvenile GBHE. But, since GRHE was their first choice, it seemed only honest to record that.

Photo 1

We now come back to photo 1. In addition to the sources cited four paragraphs above, panelist 2 also consulted the magnificent *Raptors of New Mexico*, edited by Jean-Luc E. Cartron to try and, if possible, resolve the differing IDs.

After going back and forth between these sources and the photo, panelist 2 is less certain of their initial call. A Swainson's Hawk should have a light throat, and this bird doesn't. "But", they write me in the next sentence, "it seems too small for a Golden Eagle. Also, there seems to be too much contrast between the grayish head (wrong for a GOEA anyway) and the brown chest."

I would also point out that the whitish end of the undertail is confusing. Neither GOEA nor SWHA exhibit such a characteristic that I know of.

After looking in Sibley again, panelist 2 (just to make it all the more confusing) suggests that the bird in the photo looks very much like it could be a dark morph—which, Sibley says is less than 10% of the population—Ferruginous Hawk.

So, what is it? We await the input of our experts!

8/23/2022: Follow-up responses from NTB experts

Our NTB experts, Dave Griffin and Nancy Stotz, have responded, and identified the two latest bird photos appearing in NTB. The hawk is definitely a Swainson's Hawk, and the heron is a juvenile Great Blue Heron.

So, our local NTB panelists split the results. Panelists #1 and #3 correctly identified the great blue Heron. Panelist #2 got the raptor correct. Thanks to our panelists, our experts and to Sara Kay who submitted the photos!

And remember: Please keep those photos coming in. Send any bird photos you want help identifying to either mpndltn@gmail.com or sidwebb@gmail.com and put **NTB!** in the subject line and our three panelists will do their best to tell you what the bird is.

Happy and safe birding until next time when we Name That Bird!