

Rarity submission form

Species: Raven (*Corvus Corax*) (2 birds)

Location: Thompson

Date: 25 March 2015

Submitted by: Mick Saunt

Weather: Bright and breezy with very good visibility, c. 8 degrees

Optics: 10 x 32 Swarovski

Having decided to 'travel light' I had left the 'scope in the car for a wander around the woodland at Thompson Water. In the woodland it was very quiet save for 2-3 Chiffchaffs singing so I settled down at about 10.30 to scan the fields and woodland to the west within the Stanford Battle Area

Repeated scans revealed nothing more than Common Buzzards with up to 5 birds on view but around 11.00 I picked up a lone, *very* distant Common Buzzard being mobbed by 2 corvids. With a healthy population of both Common Buzzards and corvids in the vicinity this would be nothing out of the ordinary other than for one thing: the corvids were as big as the buzzard and even longer winged! My initial reaction was to shout loudly 'They're ***** Ravens!' but knowing the 'history' of Raven sightings in the county I kept telling myself to keep calm and get something a bit more than 'they were black and as big as a buzzard'.

The initial sighting was at some distance and height but Lady Luck smiled and I continued to watch both birds as they broke off from tormenting the buzzard and began to lose height quickly, heading in my general direction. As they got closer, I feverishly dug the camera out of the rucksack but by this time both birds were flying strongly across the sun and temporarily lost to view. However, I then had a second stroke of luck when both birds then began to circle slowly together behind where I was sitting and I managed to take a number of photographs of what were still distant birds, three of which are attached to this submission (but fairly safe to say none of the photos are going to win BB Bird Photograph of the Year). Both birds then headed off towards Thompson Village continuing to gain height and were lost to view.

Description (applies to both birds)

Structure/Bare parts

- As large as Common Buzzard (seen in direct comparison) but longer winged
- Combination of relatively stocky body and long wings positioned centrally gave the impression at a distance of a slightly 'out of balance' plus sign with the diagonal of the wings exceeding the length of the body.
- The wings consisted of a long, almost parallel edged 'arm' and an equally long and pointed hand displaying five well-spaced 'fingers'

- When the birds came closer both showed a thick-set protruding neck, large head and thick and heavy black bill with a noticeable downcurved culmen. Note that in one of the photographs bright sunlight makes the bill appear white!

Plumage

Both birds appeared all black even in bright sunlight with no contrast noted anywhere on body, head or wings.

Flight action

- Deep, elastic and powerful wingbeats
- When losing height. both birds performed a spectacular series of stoops and dives and with closed wings and tail plummeted earthwards before opening them again. They both repeated the process with one of the birds performing a full 360 degree barrel roll on one of the stoops
- When soaring, wings fully extended and tail spread to reveal classic 'blunted' diamond shape although in active flight the tail shape was much less obvious.

Call

A deep guttural 'prukk' repeated a number of times. Not sure if this was from just one or both birds.

Experience with species

Seen annually in Ireland and familiar with them from travels abroad.

Am I 100% certain of the identification?

Yes





