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WHITE-TAILED KITE IN GARDEN COUNTY

On 19 August 1981 Evelyn Conrad and I had left Crescent Lake NWR for Lakeside, when quite some distance away we saw a large bird, with a white head and tail, flying in front of us. We temporarily lost sight of it, but I was determined to find it if possible, so I stopped my car where I thought it might have landed. I scoped all the power poles, as there are no other perches there except haystacks. In a matter of seconds I discovered a large raptor, with an all-white head, breast, and belly, with obvious black shoulder patches, perched on a power crossarm. Both of us could see the striking yellow/orange cere, with a bill shading from the same color to black. The upright posture reminded us of a species we had seen in Texas. We studied the bird through a 20× and 30× spotting scope under excellent viewing conditions. It was one of those days of big, fluffy thunderheads floating over, which helped to reduce the intensity of the sun's rays,

improving the viewing immensely. We then walked to within 10 to 20 feet of the power pole and studied the bird through our binoculars before we flushed it. The long, thin wings were falcon-shaped — most like an Osprey's — and the tail was long and straight, resembling the shape of an accipiter. The back and wings (mantle) were a reddish-brown, indicating that it still retained some juvenal plumage, and the feet were yellow. A Swainson's Hawk was on the next power pole, and we flushed it at the same time so we were able to make good comparisons as far as size and shape were concerned. We both agreed that it was from 2/3 to 3/4 of the size of the Swainson's. As soon as we reached Lakeside a few minutes later I called the Zeilemakers at the Refuge and described to each of them what we had seen, and asked each of them to identify it. Both immediately recognized the description of a White-tailed Kite — a species they were familiar with in California. Both of us had seen this species several times in Texas.

— *Ruth C. Green, 506 W 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005*