

Pale morph Booted Eagle vs pale morph Wahlberg's Eagle

An adaptation of comments by Ralph Buij, Rob Davies and Simon Thomsett

Both small eagles are **pale below with dark flight feathers**. The other masked raptor of this size one might consider is Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*, which doesn't have the contrast between pale underwing coverts and dark flight feathers.

Flight silhouette: To me (JB) the wings of Wahlberg's look longer than those of Booted. Head and neck of Booted are shorter than those of Wahlberg's. Extended head of Wahlberg's; combined with its often closed longish tail, can make its flight silhouette look almost like a cross, with head and neck sticking out considerably at the front and narrow tail at the back.

Head: Pale Booted always has chestnut-brown cheeks with a pale throat and never the dark mask shown by pale Wahlberg's. Pale Booted also doesn't have the punched face of pale Wahlberg's, nor (at close range) the down-curved corners of the mouth (gape) that gives Wahlberg's a grim look.

Wing pattern: A good feature is the pale inner primaries of Booted, which are not as conspicuous in Wahlberg's.

Tail pattern: Booted also has a pale brown tail, with barring largely restricted to the central tail feathers, unlike the dark tail of a Wahlberg's, which often also has a dark terminal band.

Upperparts: another good diagnostic feature of Booted Eagle is the broad light buffy band across the upper-wing coverts, buffy scapulars and a pale crescent on the rump. Upperparts of Wahlberg's always lack the pale rump and the band across the wing coverts and would be entirely dark (dark morph) or with a slight contrast between wing-feathers and wing-coverts (light morph).

Occurrence: Wahlberg's Eagle is mostly a wet season visitor to Niger, Booted Eagle a dry season visitor, but they do overlap.



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Two pictures of pale form Booted Eagle at Termit, September 2011. Note chestnut on head, pale throat and absence of mask (compare with Wahlberg's below). Note also pale inner primaries (clearest at left because of the lighting) and lack of barring in the tail (especially the outer tail).



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Two pictures of pale form Wahlberg's Eagle, Parc International du W, September 2011. Note pale head with black mask, and (bird at right) punched face of bird top right. Note also lack of markedly pale inner primaries (not always clear) and clear barring in the tail.

Note down-turned mouth in (dark form) Wahlberg's at right. Parc International du W, September 2011.

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