

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin How many? 1
Location? 1/2 mi. N. of Caylor Prairie State Preserve, Dickinson Co., IA.
Type of Habitat? Mostly open grasslands w/ scattered trees & brush; Little Sioux Riv
When? date(s): July 9, 1999 (very unusual!) time: 2:46 to 2:49 PM, CD
Who? your name and address: Douglas C. Harr, Box 65, Lanckwood, IA. 51241
Others with you: NONE
Others before or after you: None

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Falcon-shaped Raptor estimated 12" long. Blue-gray above (assumed to be male), white underparts with prominent dark streaks; tail barred & white-tipped; underside of wings strongly barred throughout. No prominent moustache stripe noted. Flying between 50-150 above ground level with notable quick rises and drops in flight, but no hovering. Being harassed by blackbird (Redwinged) and making at least one apparent attack at blackbird (unsuccessful.) NO vocalizations heard.

NOTE: Keat & Dinsmore (1996) indicate NO previous July records for this species!

Similar species; how eliminated: Am. Kestrel -- larger; different color & patterns, different flight pattern, no hovering.
N. Harrier -- smaller; sharper wings, different body pattern, no white rump patch, no hovering or lazy, low soaring.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? _____
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Viewed from road to SSE, w/ sun shining from west & above. Bird turning & diving allowed for good light on bird. Observed w/ 8x40 binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen many Merlins on spring & fall migrations over past 30+ years
Familiar w/ all other Falcons in region

References and persons consulted before writing description: Field notes taken first, then referred to National Geographic & Peterson Field Guides. also later consulted Terres' Encyclopedia of N. Am. Birds

How long before field notes made? 5 minutes this form completed? 2 days

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).