

Middlewestern Prairie Region
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Merlin 2. Number: one
3. Location State Forest Nursery in Ames, Story County, Iowa
4. Date: 2 March 1985 5. Time Bird seen: 6 times between 5:10 and 5:25 pm
5 to 20 sec's each time
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
smallish falcon (long pointed wings and long narrow tail); back dark brown; tail very dark brown crossed by narrow whitish bands; wings brown on top; breast very lite tan, heavily ~~marked~~ streaked dark brown; head brown - sides of head 'face' much lighter - 'tan'; no obvious mustache mark; wing beats deep, strong; some 'sailing' or gliding; extremely quick manuvering around & over trees. First 2 times seen was chasing Crows.
7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard
8. Description of behavior: see above. When chasing Crows did not do the 'half-roll' manuver I've seen Merlins use on Red Winged Blackbird & Pigeons - perhaps
9. Habitat - general: tree nursery just trying to run the Crows off rather than
specific: attack them to eat.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Kestral - has rusty back. Tail more or less rusty. Has obvious dark markings on lite face. female has rusty wings - male bluish wings.
11. Distance (how measured)? closest abt 35 feet;
fartherest abt 150 yards. 12. Optical equipment:
part of time: 7 x 35 binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
Sun to my west; bird usually to my east or overhead; once to northwest; thin cloud.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly diagram on back; not really nesasary.
seen several times in Iowa, Kansas, & South Dakota appearing species:
15. Other observers: Previous two days Steve Dinsmore
Day before Gordon Brown
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
None consulted before writing this description.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 5 minutes
- Paul W. Martens Address: 1120 Marston
Signature
- Date: 2 March 1985 City, State: Ames, Iowa 50010

