

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Merlin 2. Number: ONE
3. Location Sec. 6, Ocheydan twp., Osceola CO., Iowa
4. Date: 3-17-81 5. Time Bird seen: 11:43 AM to 11:45 AM
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): Slightly longer than bufflehead ducks being harassed (est. 12"); brown above, streaked breast, banded tail, with binoculars I could see slight streak on side of face, faintly rufous to pinkish-white background to streaks on breast. Could not see coloration of feet or bill. Had pointed wings & long, narrow tail.
7. Description of voice, if heard: (Not heard)
8. Description of behavior: (see Reverse side)
9. Habitat - general: Open prairie farmlands on edge of glacial escarpment near Ocheydan River
specific: 3 acre erosion control pond surrounded by grass, with some nearby shrub plantings and a few old Boxelders and ash trees.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Peregrine - not enough bold pattern and smaller than peregrine
Prairie Falcon - bird sighted was too small
11. Distance (how measured)? 175' (Knowledge of pond size from previous work with owner) 12. Optical equipment: 7x50 Bushnell Insta-Focus Binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
High thin overcast (cloudy, but bright), w/sun about 120° behind (left side)
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Have seen 3 Merlins in past 7 years. Have seen prairie falcons in S. Dak., but have never seen a Peregrine.
15. Other observers: NONE
16. Did the others agree with your identification? N/A
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: N/A
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
New Peterson Field Guide to the Birds; & Field Guide to Birds of N. Am. (Zimm, Brunn, Singer & Robbins) All observations were noted and tentative ID as Merlin made before consulting guides. However, tail bands in Peterson guide illustrated as darker than those I observed.
9. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 5 minutes

Douglas C. Hass
Signature

Address: P.O. Box 65

Date: March 17, 1981

City, State: Larchwood, IA. 51241

⑧ Description of Behavior:

seen flying over pond w/fast wingbeats. I frightened a small flock of Buffleheads, which circled pond several times before getting ready to settle in again. Last Drake was stooped upon by falcon-like hawk from a height estimated to be 100 ft. (+). Duck dove straight into water with a resounding "crack" & falcon leveled off in a powerful curve about 15' above pond. It then rapidly circled pond for about 45 sec. to 1 min, & finally flew out of sight to southwest.