

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

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Peregrine Falcon 2. Number: one
 3. Location abt 3 miles south of Colo (Story County), Iowa
 4. Date: 9 May 1982 5. Time Bird seen: abt 10 AM ~~X00~~ abt two minutes
 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):
crow sized: long narrow pointed wings; long narrow slightly banded tail - tail quite narrow even when spread. dark gray above - speckled below. head dark gray above, light below.
 7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard
 8. Description of behavior: see back
 9. Habitat - general: cropland
specific: field with corn stubble residue
 10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
male marsh hawk - no white rump patch, speckled underneath, much darker above, contrasting face pattern, style of flight very different. Prairie Falcon - was dark gray.
Buteos - wings were long and very pointed - tail narrow - falcon like flight.
Accipiters - wings were long and narrow and pointed.
 11. Distance (how measured)? only wild guesses 12. Optical equipment:
350-400 yds off at first; 300(?) ft up when passing overhead. 7 x 35 binoculars
 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
west half sky overcast; east half clear. bird first seen south - flew overhead to north.
 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
never seen Peregrine Falcon before; have seen Prairie Falcon several times in South Dakota.
 15. Other observers: none
 16. Did the others agree with your identification?
 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
Birds of North America - Golden Press
Field Guide To the Birds - Peterson
 19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 3 & 1/2 hrs
- Carl Martens* Address: 1120 Marston
Signature
- Date: 9 May 1982 City, State: Ames, Iowa

#8. Behaviour

Was away to south in corn field with corn "trash" on surface. A slight hump behind.

While driving west saw flash of white of ^a meadowlark's tail and what looked like a Killdeer's wings suddenly raised (neither of these birds was at all obvious otherwise at that distance and with the corn trash on the ground) as a large bird made a very rapid low pass over the area from east to west very low over the ground. I stopped the car, and saw the bird go up swing around to the east and make another very fast pass low over the ground abt where the meadowlark and killdeer were. I got out of the car as it circled up in the sky. Then it came north toward me. I got a good look at it ^{with binoculars} as it passed over head and for a little while as it went on north. Several times it turned around and faced into the wind which was blowing hard out of the south. Was able to see the top side fairly well each time it made a turn to face the wind. Its actions generally similar to what I've seen Prairie Falcons do.

I was the last car on one of the IOU field trips that morning. The line had stopped, but most of the cars were over a hump and out of sight so I didn't know what they had stopped for. After the line began moving, it was some time before the car ahead of me started up again. I was just starting up myself when I decided to take one last look around, before going on. I would have liked to have had some of the others seen this bird, but by the time I got out of the car and realized what it was all the other cars were out of sight over the hump.