

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Peregrine falcon **MYERS** 2. Number 1

3. Location Sandpit along Cedar River in Waterloo

4. Date: Sept. 19, 1980 5. Time Bird Seen: 4:15 P.M. to 4:50 P.M.

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):

Size - about exactly crow size - easy because a crow landed in the same tree while the peregrine was feeding

Shape - falcon-like - long pointed wings - fairly long ~~tail~~ tail

Color-pattern - Back was a dark bluish grey -

Head was capped dark (blackish) with very prominent side burn ^{on} mustaches extending down through eye into white cheek. Throat was pure white. Breast was barred but distance didn't allow any better description than that. Legs + feet were yellow.

* Please read back of this page -

7. Description of voice, if heard: —

← lesser yellowlegs - I think

8. Description of behavior: Bird attacked and killed shorebird in flight and carried it to perch where it ate it.

9. Habitat - general: private - deserted sandpit along Cedar River

specific: Bird perched in a dead elm to feed - then flew off down the river

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:

The merlin is falcon shaped and bluish backed but the size + the black side burns were all peregrine.

11. Distance (how measured)?

About 50 yd. at first (stepped off)
and about 150 yd. later (guess?)

12. Optical equipment: B&H 4X35's

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

Sky was mostly overcast but bright and the sun came through for a few minutes. Sun was behind and to right of me.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

This is my first peregrine but I have seen merlins. From my vantage the identification was easy.

15. Other observers: I was alone but after bird flew I went to Tom Stone who ~~at~~ went right back but with no luck.

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:

I checked Petersen's + Robbins - I really didn't need a book to make this description or decision.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? First notes = that day

Signature: Robert K. Myers Address: 1236 Sylvia Ave.

Date: of this draft Oct. 30, 1980 City, State: Waterloo, Iowa, 50701

(OVER)

Note!

Because this was truly an extraordinary sighting I thought you might be interested in how it came about. I was watching two ospreys overhead and had hunched down so I wasn't too obvious. When they had passed, I stood up and took about two steps to the top of a knoll. My presence flushed a small mixed flock of shorebirds that were feeding below me. I really wasn't watching the bird that was hit but a movement in the left corner of my eye made me turn in time to see the shorebird (lesser yellowlegs I think) being hit by the peregrine. I don't know where the falcon came from. He simply grabbed the bird in the air and bit at it while flying and carried it to a dead elm just across the sandpit. There he plucked and ate at the victim. The drifting feathers attracted six crows - one even landing in the same tree. None made any noise. After thirty-five minutes the shorebird or remains fell dropped to the ground and the peregrine kept looking down as if he hadn't meant to drop it. One crow followed the remains immediately down and the others started a real uproar. They did not dive at the peregrine but noise must have bothered as he flew off.

The shorebird was about 50 yd. from me when first hit and the perch was about 100-150 yd. from my vantage. Really the only thing that could have made this once in a life-time sighting better would have been my spotting scope for an extra close look at the feast.

Bob Myers