

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin (Falco columbarius) How many? 1 adultLocation? East side of Sweet Marsh, Bremer Co.Type of habitat? Open disked field along road, riverbottom, mixed deciduous woods near-byWhen? date(s): April 16, 1983 time: 9:25 am to 9:30 amWho? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: Bob Myers, Russell Haysothers 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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

We were driving East on a gravel road on the East side of Sweet Marsh when Bob noticed a Falcon-like bird flying across the field to our Right. The bird over took us and flew alongside the car for a while before flying in front of the car hood at about 20 feet ahead of us. It then flew low to the ground over a cultivated field to our left and landed in the field. We could not locate the bird again to view it with a telescope. The bird had a very strong flight with constant short wingbeats. Flight was falcon-like with short pointed wings. The bird had a dark bluish back and black primaries and a dark cap. The tail was dark with 4 or 5 darker bands on it that really stood out and were easy to see. The breast and belly had dark striping on them. No facial pattern could be seen other than the dark cap on top of the head. No voice was heard.

Similar species and how eliminated: Peregrine Falcon is larger with dark facial pattern
Peregrine breast is also barred not streaked.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Sunny at time of sighting; viewed from approx. 20 ft as it flew along side the car along a gravel road and out into a cultivated field; viewed with 7x35 mm Bausch + Lomb Roof prism binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen several Merlins in Iowa and on East Coast in Virginia; Have seen a few Peregrine Falcons in Virginia

References and persons consulted before writing description: NoneHow long before field notes made? 8 Hrs this form completed? 2 Days

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