

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin How many? 1Location? State Forest Nursery AmesType of habitat? flushed out of a row of Pine treesWhen? date(s): 28 Feb 1985 time: 4:30 PM to 4:55 PMWho? your name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

others with you: _____

others before or after you: _____

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.

The bird was first flushed from a row of pine trees. The following field marks were noted: medium sized bird, about a foot long. The narrow, pointed wings and long, narrow tail identified the bird as a small falcon. The bird ~~is~~ would flap its wings rapidly for a few seconds and then glide around, all the while flying quite rapidly. This is typical flight behavior for falcons. As the bird flew around, it was constantly diving at any of the numerous crows in the area. When the bird would flare away after a dive, I could plainly see the dark bars on the tail and the uniformly dark colored back. The bird was also heavily streaked on the belly and on the undersides of the wings. These field marks identify the bird as a Merlin. The bird was seen for approximately 25 min. before it finally disappeared into another row of pine trees.

Similar species and how eliminated: Sharp-shinned Hawk eliminated by lack of ^{narrow} pointed wings, heavily streaked underparts. Am. Kestrel eliminated because this bird had no red on back or tail. This bird also had a uniformly dark colored back unlike Am. Kestrel. Am. Kestrel also lacks the strongly barred tail this bird exhibited. This bird also lacked strong facial pattern of Am. Kestrel.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? _____

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Light was excellent - sun behind me and a clear sky. Estimated viewing distance was 20' - 200' feet. Used a B+L 20x Telescope and Nikon 8x23 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen several Merlins.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

NBS Field Guide to Birds of North AmericaHow long before field notes made? 1 hour this form completed? 1 hour

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