

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin How many? 1Location? Grammer Grove Wildlife Area, n. Marshall CountyType of habitat? river bottom woods, along Iowa RiverWhen? date(s): September 22, 1984 time: 11:30 to 11:35Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdtothers with you: Mark Proescholdt

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.

~~Standing~~ on a ridge at the level of treetops about 120-150 yards away watching Broadwings & Sharpshins migrating we first saw a falcon chasing a Sharpshin over the trail & into the treetops. In & out they flew with the falcon diving 2 or 3 times at the Sharpshin. It was about the same size of the Sharpshin & the comparison between the rounded accipiter wings & the long pointed wings of the falcon was so evident. As the falcon flew fast to a tall dead tree about 80 yards away I noticed the dark brown back & long brown tail. When it landed the tail fanned out momentarily to emphasize the banded tail - dark brown bands alternating with lighter brown. For 3 minutes or more we were able to study the bird as it perched, see its heavily streaked underparts & its facial pattern so much less distinct than the ^{heavily} mustached Kestrel. Suddenly with fast determined flight it passed directly over our heads about 20' above us - our last look at the ♀ or immature Merlin.

Similar species and how eliminated: Kestrel or Sharpshinned hawk - falcon shape, not accipiter - & this bird had dark brown, not rufous back & tail of a Kestrel, & it had banded tail & streaked undersides.
Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Cloudy, sun behind us - 120-150 yards at first, 80 yards in tree, flew 20ft. over heads (approximated) - binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Many Kestrels & Sharpshins - a few merlinsReferences and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson's guideHow long before field notes made? made at once this form completed? October 1, 1984

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