

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

Species: Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) Number: I

Location: Sweet Marsh, which is located I mile East of Tripoli, Bremer County, IA.

Date: April 16, 1978 Time bird seen: 11:05 am. to 11:10 am.

Description: In length and wingspan the bird was near that of a Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). In shape, head was set close into body, wings were long and wide at their base but became narrow and wedge shaped at the tips. Tail, was better than medium length and slightly tapered. Generally, the shape was like that of a large, heavy set American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*). Color; back, upper wing surface, rump and tail were a grey. Head and part of the nape were dark. The underparts were only seen at a distance, and can only said to be lighter than upperparts. The facial pattern was not seen, neither was color of bill, eye or feet.

Description of behavior: When first observed the bird was perched in open on a post, which had pools and marsh surrounding it. The bird had it's back towards the observer. Immediately upon being observed the bird took flight, rapidly gaining height, and moving away towards the North. It was watched through binoculars at this time, and was observed to circle a large area of open water, at an estimated height of 100 feet. It circled the Southwest part of Sweet Marsh three times then moved off to the Northwest, aided by a 20 mph wind, which was out of the Southeast. In flight the rapid wing beats, and fast strong style of flying was noted. .

Habitat: The area of Sweet Marsh, where bird was first perched is a grazed grassy pasture. Which after much rain in recent weeks, is partially flooded, and often had attracted shorebirds of several species.

Similar species: Cooper's and Goshawk do not have pointed wings, and never perch in open. Merlin is much to small, size of a big Blue Jay, my bird was larger than a Crow. Prairie Falcon, the falcon I saw was grey not dull olive. ? (brown, NSTK)

Distance: At the time of first observation, which was the closest approach, was stepped off and came to about 80 yards. Optical equipment: Bushnell Custom 7 by 35 purchased in 1977, the bird was viewed only with the binoculars and unaided eyes.

Light: Perfect viewing conditions, clear day sun nearly directedly overhead.

Previous experience: I have seen the Cooper's Hawk on many occasions, and the Goshawk on two occasions. I have had two observations of the Merlin, and have seen the Prairie Falcon during the past summer.

Books consulted: One, Robbin's "Birds of North America", was used to find color.

Date: April 17, 1978

Address: St. Lucas, Iowa

Signature: *Joe Schaufenbuel*  
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