

Winter 1987-1988

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Merlin 17,19,26 February downtown Des Moines, Polk County

a male - grayish general color above with banded tail. never saw bottom side except from distance too great to be sure of coloring. long narrow tail with narrow, pointed wings. Observed each time from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Iowa cafeteria on the east side of the 16th floor of the Ruan Building in downtown Des Moines. No binoculars. First seen about 12:45 Feb. 17th, flying from south east corner of Ruan building (a little below the level of the 16th floor) to the south east corner of the new parking ramp/office building about 2 blocks to the northeast. The bird was about 75 feet away at the closest. It perched on the southeast corner of the top of the parking ramp till at least 1 o'clock. Sun was shining light was good. The bird's flight was very "direct" with very deep wing strokes. It did a "loop" before landing on the parking ramp. I saw the bird briefly again about 12:30 on Feb 19th flying the the same area east side of the Ruan Building. It landed on a sign on top of a building to the southeast of the Ruan building. Having seen pigeons on this sign at various times it was obvious that the bird could be nearly as big as a Peregrine. I saw the bird again beginning about 12:30 Feb. 26 flying just east of the Ruan Building. I last saw it circling and going southeast over the Des Moines River. This bird had no rust on back or tail so could not have been a Kestrel. Its long profile, long narrow tail, narrow pointed wings, a speed & style of flight clearly differentiated it from a blue-gray pigeon. Even when circling "soaring?" it flapped its wings in "bursts" of wingbeats frequently. The tail was quite narrow even when spread. 12:40

Short-eared Owl 21 February one at Doolittle Prairie- Story County

Northern Shrike 24 January one at Hendricksons Marsh - Story Co.
upper half of eye above the upper line of the black mask, which did not meet over the beak; lower mandible light at base.
Seen with Steve Dinsmore.