

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin (female) How many? 1

Location? S.W. Chickasaw Co.

Type of Habitat? Fence row in row-cropped ag. land

When? date(s): June 3, 1990 time: 3:45 PM to

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil 1315 41st St. Des Moines, IA 50311

Others with you: Non-birders only

Others 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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Noted small raptor flying rapidly along fence row perhaps 50' from road and parallel to my car. Noted long, pointed wings and shape characteristic of a falcon. The only field marks noted was the dark brown, about chocolate brown, back and wings. All I saw was brown - if there was a banded tail or other features, I didn't have time to notice.

The bird was approximately the size of a Kestrel, or perhaps a little larger. I went back to look for the bird, but found only two Kestrels. Both were distinct from the subject bird in that they both showed conspicuous rufous on back. While their size was approximately the same, their flight was somewhat less swift and powerful than the subject bird.

No other field marks seen.

Based upon the pictures in NGS, I would guess the bird was of the columbarius race.

Total viewing time, perhaps five seconds.

Based upon habitat in area, it did not appear to be appropriate nesting habitat. Too bad.

Similar species; how eliminated: No other small falcon has uniform dark brown back and upper wing surface. It was much too small to be a female Peregrine.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NA

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. No optics used. Sky cloudy, but otherwise, viewing conditions good.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen lots of Kestrels. Have seen several Peregrines and Merlins in Iowa. Have seen several Prairies in western U.S.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Checked NGS after sighting in attempt to identify this bird to race.

How long before field notes made? 2 hours this form completed? 18 hours.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).