

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Prairie Falcon

How Many?1

Location?Big Creek S.P., Polk Co.-north end

Habitat?flying over lake

Date?5 Sep 1988

Time?12:35-12:38 p.m.

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird:Reid & Pam Allen

Description of bird:We were looking over shorebirds at the north end of Big Creek L. when I noticed a large raptor flying low over the lake. The shorebirds quickly flushed when the raptor approached, and continued to fly around while the bird was present. Initially, we thought the bird was an accipiter, but the pointed wings soon identified the bird as a falcon.

We observed the bird for about three minutes before it flew out of sight to the south. In flight, the black axillaries of the bird were clearly evident. The wings were long and pointed and the tail was long and slender. The rest of the underparts were white with some darker speckles on the belly and breast. The upperparts were grayish, except that the upper surface of the tail was browner. The bird appeared to be about the size of a crow, or perhaps slightly larger.

Similar species and how eliminated:The large size, long tail, long, pointed wings, and dark axillaries eliminate all other raptors.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were good with the sun behind us. Estimated viewing distance was about 100 yards. I used Bausch and Lomb 8x40 binoculars and a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:I have seen many Prairie Falcons in western states and I have seen both Prairie and Peregrine falcons in Iowa.

References consulted:NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made?made immediately after sighting

How long before this form was completed?2 days