

Merlin -- Documentation

In the afternoon of October 3 my wife and I leisurely observed a female Merlin sitting at the top of a dead tree in a neighbor's yard. The sun was behind us; my Nikon 9x25 brought the bird into beautifully clear focus. The bird was about the size of a Kestrel, but lacked the bold facial markings. Its underparts were vertically streaked; the relatively light brownish color suggested a form of the richardsonii race.

After a short time the bird took off in pursuit of a Red-bellied Woodpecker. Both birds came right overhead of us. This allowed us to observe the pointed wings and the falcon-like silhouette. A few minutes later the Merlin returned to its perch (without a woodpecker!), and remained there for another 20 minutes or so.

The Merlin is a regular migrant in this part of Iowa. I see at least two or three of them per year. Submitting documentations for this bird is fast becoming monotonous drudgery, and probably a superfluous exercise.

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