

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

**Species:** Prairie Falcon

**Location:** Swan Wildlife Refuge, Warren County, IA

**Habitat:** Overlook of river bottom, waterfowl refuge

**Date:** 27 October 1991

**Time:** 15:50 to 15:51

**Name and Address:** Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

**Other observers:** None at the time

**Description of bird:** The bird was discovered when a small flock of shorebirds rose to the air. They had been disturbed by a pointed-winged raptor, a large falcon, which was flying low and rapidly across the grassy areas. I initially thought it was one of the released Peregrines which had been seen periodically in the area. When I put the scope on the bird, however, I saw a pale, brown falcon with two narrow streaks coming down the face on either side of the eye as opposed to a hooded effect of a Peregrine. The head also showed a light superciliary mark. Believing this was a Prairie Falcon, I watched it for approximately one minute as it moved powerfully and directly across the wet, grassy areas disturbing not only shorebirds but coots and teal. For most of this time the bird was so far below my vantage point that I could only observe the upper parts. It did bank enough one time, however, that some black color to the underwing was briefly visible.

**Similar species and how eliminated:** The pointed wings and powerful, direct flight identified the bird as a falcon. Size eliminated all but the more likely Peregrine. The pale color and narrow facial markings with light superciliary all but eliminated the Peregrine. The brief look at the black on the underwing confirmed this.

**Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification?** NA

**If yes, explain:**

**Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics):** Partly cloudy skies. Observed through scope at 15x as close as 200 to 250 feet.

**Previous experience with species and similar ones:** Peregrines have been observed all fall at this location. I have seen a number of Prairie Falcons over the years in the west.

**References and persons consulted before writing description:** National Geographic Field Guide

**How long before field notes made?** One hour    **How long before this form completed?** One hour