

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Merlin 2. Number 1
3. Location Sugar Bottom Recreation area on Coralville Reservoir
4. Date: 3-11-79 5. Time Bird Seen: 10:20 to -
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
- I was walking from a corn field into a wooded valley when a small hawk flushed from the bottom of the valley. It flew away from me and was not seen again. The bird appeared slightly larger than a sparrow hawk. It had narrow pointed wings and a long tail. Upper parts were dark gray-black, tail same color but appeared finely barred. Under parts were light gray - with bird going away I could not detect any streaks. Head was too far away - could not see any eyestripe. The bird flew continuously and fast away from me - it did not glide. Pigeon-like flight.
7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard
8. Description of behavior: fast falcon-like flight
9. Habitat - general: wooded valley with adjacent open fields  
specific: small valley 1/4 - 1/2 mile from Coralville Reservoir
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
Sparrow hawk - no red on tail, no facial marking, unlikely habitat  
Sharpshinned hawk - wing shape and flight pattern different from sharpshinned
11. Distance (how measured)? 40+ yards (estimate)
12. Optical equipment: 8x Leitz Thoroid binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
Thin overcast - flat lighting
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
I have seen merlins only twice before, but have seen other possible species many times
15. Other observers:  
none
16. Did the others agree with your identification?
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: none
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
Robbins Birds of North America, consulted but did not influence description
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 2 hrs
- Signature: TH Kent Address: 211 Richards St
- Date: 3-11-79 City, State: Iowa City Ia 52240