

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Merlin 2. Number 1
 3. Location Dunbar Slough, Greene Co Iowa
 4. Date: 9/21/80 5. Time Bird Seen: ~ 8:00 Am to 8:15
 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):

A kestrel-sized hawk flew in front of us while we were watching shore birds - fast, pointed wings, narrow finely barred tail, overall gray brown. After several passes at a killdeer, the hawk landed in a pine tree 225 yards away. I walked within 40 yards of the bird and it flew back to another bare tree in good light at about 60 yards. Gray-brown plain back and wings, lighter gray-brown underparts with some horizontal streaking. Wildeye line. Long-barred tail. Later the bird came back to chase the shore birds again.
 7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard
 8. Description of behavior: fast flight with rapid change in direction while chasing shore birds
 9. Habitat - general: marsh with mud flats, trees adjacent to marsh
 specific: Dunbar Slough
 10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
Size differed from Peregrine seen early at same location. Markings specific for Merlin
 11. Distance (how measured)?
40 yards while flying (estimated)
40 yards while sitting (paced)
 12. Optical equipment:
8x Leitz Tevovid
 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
side to back lighting
 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Seen 3 times in last 2 years in Iowa
 15. Other observers:
Carl and Mike Newton, Tom Shires
 16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: none
 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
not used
 19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 1/2 hour
- Signature: Thomas H Kent Address: 211 Richards St
 Date: 9/24/80 City, State: Iowa City IA