

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin How many? 1 ♀Location? Graceland Cemetery, Sioux City, IAType of habitat? open canopy mixed woodlandWhen? date(s): 12-17-88 time: 4:30 to 5:00 PMWho? your name and address: Bill Huser, 319 W. 17th St., S. Sioux City, NE.others with you: noneothers before or after you: Jerry Probst, S.C., but couldn't locate bird.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

A small to medium-sized hawk w/ rapid, easy flight was flushed. My first impression was kestrel appearance. On examining the perched bird, the following was noted. Rather stout, bulky body compared w/ kestrel, also linear dimensions seemed greater than those of kestrel. Dark crown contrasted by narrow, light-colored superciliary. Small dark bill w/ yellow cere. Bold brown breast streaking, dark brown back. Boldly barred tail extending approx 1 inch beyond wings. Falcon face pattern limited to indistinct black vertically-oriented blotch in front of + below the eye.

Seen in flight, from side, two more times. Wings were broad compared to kestrel but obviously pointed. On the perched bird wings also appeared pointed.

Similar species and how eliminated: Kestrel—size, ^{large} bold ^{brown} breast streaking, lack of distinct facial pattern, absence of rust-brown coloration.

Sharp-shinned/Cooper's—pointed wings, relatively short tail—1" beyond wingtips,

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No ^{indistinct falcon facial pattern}

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

indirect, low intensity skylight, estimated 40 yds, Celestron 32X61 scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones: 2 previous sightings in S.D.References and persons consulted before writing description: Nat'l Geog. F. G.How long before field notes made? while in sight this form completed? 12 days

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