

DOCUMENTATION FORM

- 1) Species: Prairie Falcon
- 2) Number: 1
- 3) Location: 1 mile west of Missouri Valley, Iowa; Harrison Co., St. Johns Twsp., Sect. 17.
- 4) Date: 10 October, 1981
- 5) Time seen: 3:50 p.m. to 4:50 p.m.
- 6) Description: In flight, the bird was twice the size of an American Kestrel; a long tail and pointed wings, typical of a falcon, were observed. The back coloration was a "dark olive brown." The facial pattern showed the following features: "narrow moustache below eye; white superciliary stripe; a white vertical auricular bar behind the eye which extended up to the level of the eye; and a white throat."  
 "Black axillars were briefly seen in flight and also when the bird occasionally raised its wings while feeding on a prey item it had caught."  
 "A light-colored area on the hind-neck and vertical breast streakings were also seen.)
- 7) Voice: Not heard.
- 8) Behavior: The bird "did not allow close approach by foot." It was first seen feeding on what I presume was a Starling; it carried this prey item as it flew away from us when we approached it on foot; telescope observations revealed that it continued to feed on this prey item when it landed again.
- 9) Habitat: General: Open agricultural land; few trees.  
Specific: Winter wheat field (growth of winter wheat less than 4 inches tall).
- 10) Similar species which are eliminated:  
 Peregrine Falcon: this species lacks black axillars and white superciliary stripe; moustache is thicker on this species.  
 Merlin: this species is much smaller and lacks moustache and black facial pattern.  
 Gyrfalcon: this species is larger and lacks superciliary stripe and black axillars.
- 11) Distance: Originally 45 yards; after it flew 80 yards. (estimated by eyesight).
- 12) Optical equipment: Pentax 10 x 50 Binoculars and Bushnell Spacemaster Telescope with 20x eyepiece and zoom lens.
- 13) Light: Lighting conditions good; sun was to the right (to the West) of myself and the bird.
- 14) Previous experience: The only falcons which I had identified before this species were the American Kestrel and Merlin.
- 15) Other observers: Joe Schaufenbuel
- 16) Agreement: The other observer agreed with the identification.
- 17) Other independent observers: None
- 18) Golden Field Guide by C.S. Robbins and a Field Guide to the Birds by R.T. Petersen. Both references upheld the identification of this species.
- 19) This report was made from notes taken directly in the field.

*John C. Robinson*  
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