

Middlewestern Prairie Region
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Merlin, ad. ♂ 2. Number: 1

3. Location Co. Rd W48, Johnson Co., Iowa, N of Iowa River

4. Date: 3/20/1977 5. Time Bird seen: 1:55 to 2:05 PM

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): Small falcon, about size of Am. Kestrel, but more squat, short neck and tail, relatively large head. In flight, pointed and angled wings evident. Upper parts uniformly grayish-blue. Contrast between dark eye and whitish face without any moustache pattern well seen. Also yellow cere. Underparts lighter, streaking not seen.

7. Description of voice, if heard: no vocalization

8. Description of behavior: alternatingly perched on tree limbs in upright posture or flew (not above 30') with fast wingbeats, maneuvering deftly

9. Habitat - general: tall-grass fields with scattered dead or bare trees
specific: flood plain of Coralville Reservoir (west end)

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Am. Kestrel: no rufous on back; facial pattern of Kestrel clearly not present; Chantrel Bird. Sharp-shinned Hawk: head proportionately large, tail shorter wings pointed and angled, not rounded. Peregrine: too small; lack of heavy black moustach

11. Distance (how measured)? est. 200-400 ft.

12. Optical equipment: 7x35 Leibniz Trinovik, 20-45x Bushnell Zoom Scope

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): light overcast with a few breaks; position varied - when optimal, sun behind me in

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: line with me & bird
Merlins seen: Sept. 1970 Bermuda (several); Nov. 1972 (♂) near Denver; Nov. 74 (♂) Padre

15. Other observers: Island, Texas; Sept. 76 (imm. or ♀) fly-by near Iowa City

16. Did the others agree with your identification? —

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: —

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: standard field guides, Brown and Audubon; consulted after description drafted - no influence

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 8:30 PM

Signature: As Halimi Address: R# 6

Date: 3/21/1977 City, State: Iowa City, IA 52240