

What species? Merlin How many? 1 ♀ or imm.Location? Riverton A., Fremont Co., IAType of Habitat? flying over large lakeWhen? date(s): 27 Dec 1988 time: approx. 8:5am to 8:17amWho? your name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010Others with you: Ross Silcock, Tabor, IAOthers before or after you: \_\_\_\_\_

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

When bird was first seen flying toward us at a height of about 75 yards, we thought it was a Mourning Dove. However, the more pointed wings, long tail, and more powerful wingbeats soon identified the bird as a falcon. The bird flew directly over us, made a pass at a sparrow, and then flew back by us again. The bird seemed about the size of an American kestrel, but was perhaps a bit stockier. Upperparts were dark brown. Head also dark brown, no obvious facial pattern. Underparts whitish with darker streaks on breast, flanks, and belly. Tail long, brown with lighter barring to tip. Wings fairly long, definitely pointed; brown above, lighter underneath. Bird flew with deep, powerful wingstrokes, not the more fluttery flight of a kestrel. Bird was unquestionably a female or immature Merlin.

Similar species; how eliminated:

The small size, lack of any obvious facial pattern, and lack of dark axillars eliminates Peregrine and Prairie Falcons.

The brown upperparts, barred tail, streaked underparts, and more powerful wingstroke eliminates Am. Kestrel.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Light very good, sun behind us. Estimated viewing distance as close as 50 yards. Used Bausch and Lomb 8x40 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen many Merlins in Iowa, including a couple in winter. I am also very familiar with other falcons and raptors.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? \_\_\_\_\_ this form completed? 1 day

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).