

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Prairie Falcon How many? 1Location? NE of Spirit Lake - Dickinson CountyType of habitat? Gravel roadside - on telephone poleWhen? date(s): Dec. 31, 1995 time: 12:00 to 12:15 pmWho? your name and address: Ed Thelen RR 8725 Spirit Lake, IA. 51360others with you: NONE

others 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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

While driving along a gravel road I spotted a crow-sized bird perched on a telephone pole \approx 100 yds ahead. My first thought was a buteo. As I pulled over and glassed it I could see it was a falcon. Its facial mustache was fine and darker than its head or back. It had brown streaks on its chest, belly sides and flanks. Its tail was square. Its upper parts were grey-brown. I was convinced at this point it was a prairie, but it was still perched on the pole even though I was only a mere 30 ft away.

As I opened my car door it finally flew, exposing its long pointed wings and also its underwing coverts and axillars which were much darker than its primaries.

It stayed less than 10 ft. above the ground as it flew and disappeared over a knoll.

Similar species and how eliminated: percygrine & gyrfalcon
don't have dark axillars

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Good - seen approximately 30 ft away (est.)
used 8.5 x 44 binocs

Previous experience with species and similar ones: 1st prairie I've made positive ID. Seen several over the yearsReferences and persons consulted before writing description: where I couldn't ID at the time.How long before field notes made? same day this form completed? 2 daysMAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52240