

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What Species? Merlin How Many? 1

Location? Bay's Branch WMA, Guthrie Co.

Type of Habitat? grassy field bordered by pine and cedar shelter belts

When? date(s): December 20th, 1988 time: 1:00PM to 1:10PM

Who? your name and address: Ray Cummins Centerville, Iowa 52544

Others with you: John Hoogerheriee

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

The following features were used to identify this Merlin:

- 1) Small pointed winged falcon.
- 2) Light brown back & wings indicating the subspecies expected in Iowa.
- 3) Slightly Heavier breast than Sparrow Hawk.
- 4) Barred tail w/ wider black terminal band.
- 5) Breast heavily streaked up & down w/ dark marks.
- 6) Flight fast & direct w/short glides.

Similar species; how eliminated: American Kestrel by tail pattern, heavy breast, and did hover during flight. Eurasian Kestrel female by tail was squared not wedged.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
10x50 Nikon binoculars at 50 to 150yds in good light, a very good look at a hunting Merlin.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Seen annually in Iowa

Reference and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? 3 Hrs. This form completed? 12 days