

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin How many? 1

Location? along highway 169 between Algona + Burt, Kossuth Co. Ia.

Type of Habitat? open farm country

When? date(s): June 4, 1989 time: 7:15 pm. to _____


Who? your name and address: Matthew Kenne 709 N. Phillips Algona, Ia. 50511

Others with you: none

Others before or after you: none

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.

I was driving home from USNWR at 55 mph (or a little more) when I spotted a bird flying up the ditch (towards me) ^{SOUTH} to my left at a little higher than eye level. It was pigeon sized, with pointed wings. It flew straight, constantly flapping, very strongly, and moving extremely fast into a slight 5-10 mph headwind.

I saw a dark Kestrel-LIKE falcon, ~~with~~ brown with a brown breast, and a dark spotted underwing. The tail was light from the wing to ~~about~~ the 1/2 way point + dark to the tip.  (At its closest, straight to my left)

I got one ^{good?} look while I tried to keep on the road. [!] By the time I stopped the car (I probably should have pulled over) of stepped out with my binocs, it was long gone.

Similar species; how eliminated:

The bird was darker than a Kestrel with no rust or blue on upper surfaces, darker below. It didn't bounce, flutter, or glide (or wander) as a Kestrel does, especially in a light breeze. The dark back half of the tail was different than the Kestrel's light one, and it was thicker + shorter. Kestrels always remind me of a Killdeer, this bird didn't remotely bring one to mind.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NA
If yes, explain:

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

Bright, high haze, sun directly from my right to bird on my left. 10 yds? ...
eyesight

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I've seen a few Merlins (one in almost the same spot last year) and Kestrels are common.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

none

How long before field notes made? none this form completed? 3 hrs.

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