

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Merlin How many? 1Location? Sweet Marsh - Bremer Co.Type of habitat? Brushy edge and open field along east side of marshWhen? date(s): April 16, 1983 time: 9:25 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.Who? your name and address: Robert K. Myers, 1236 Sylvia Ave Waterloo, Iowaothers with you: Francis Moore + 6 other member of field tripothers before or after you: Russ Hays found bird about 1/2 hr. earlier

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.

The bird was first seen flying low and parallel to our car at edge of a brushy field about 1/4-1/2 mi from where Russ Hays found bird. As we stopped car the bird came along side, crossed the ditch and road in front of us and disappeared in open field across the road. We thought the bird landed on the ground but could not find it.

The shape was typical small falcon - very pointed wings - fairly long narrow tail. Dorsal side was dark slate blue-gray - Tail had black ~~back~~ bands on top - wider band at terminal end and at least several other fairly heavy bands.

The breast, from what I could see, appeared more buff with darker streaks. The size was about like kestrel.

Similar species and how eliminated: American kestrel would show reddish back and tail and would not show the heavy bands on tail

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Closest was 20' as it flew up from ditch and crossed road in front of our car. Sky was bright overcast then (whole day was very variable - sun - clouds - blizzards - etc.)

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen merlins on two other occasions and have observed many kestrelsReferences and persons consulted before writing description: I checked Robbins + PetersonHow long before field notes made? about 8 hr. this form completed? one day

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