

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Merlin 2. Number 1
3. Location Conesville Marsh Louisa Co. Iowa
4. Date: 4-21-79 5. Time Bird Seen: 8³⁰ to 8⁴⁰ Approx

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):

A small bird which I thought might be a blackbird flew across a wet grassy field. When I put my binoculars on it, it was clearly a small gray falcon. As it flew ^{and directly} over the field it appeared the size and shape of a kestrel but had gray body and wings and long gray, finely barred tail. It lit in a sappling 4 feet off the ground at the edge of a woods with back to us. We could see a gray back and blacker wings and lightly barred tail (bars were white in flight). Chin was gray ^{white} but we did not see the belly. We slowly approached to within 50 yards until it flew again and exhibited the same features noted above.

7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard

8. Description of behavior:

Low, straight, fast flying falcon

9. Habitat - general: wet grassy field and wooded edge

specific: Conesville Marsh between lakes

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:

Kestrel, Sharp-shinned hawk

11. Distance (how measured)?

50 yds (est)

12. Optical equipment:

8x40 Leitz binocular

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

cloudy

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

have seen Merlin only 2-3 times

15. Other observers:

T.K. Shires

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

none

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

Consulted Robbins' letter - did not influence description

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 6 hrs

Signature: Thomas M Kent Address: 211 Richards St

Date: 4-21-79 City, State: Iowa City Iowa 52240