

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Prairie Falcon How many? 1Location? Marshalltown, IowaType of habitat? HyVee parking lot !!When? date(s): April 4, 1990 time: 11:25 to 11:26 AMWho? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, Liscombothers with you: noneothers 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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I had the groceries loaded into the trunk & had climbed into my car at the HyVee parking lot in Marshalltown when I looked up to see a falcon beating north against a strong north wind (25-30 mph). I've never seen such sickle-shaped wings on a falcon, the long wings drawn back so incredibly far, as the bird rowed hard against the strong wind directly over my car. (P) Certainly too large for a Kestrel, & with a faster & more direct flying pattern, I wondered, "a large Merlin?" as I rushed out of the car looking for the strongly barred tail. Instead, as it tilted, I saw light underparts & the dark axillars & underwing coverts of a Prairie falcon! Twice it tilted, enabling me to see that distinctive marking before disappearing up & over the trees to the north.

All in all I saw the falcon probably 45 seconds as it blasted directly overhead & on north, about 25'-30' high, for a distance of 1/2 a block on that bright & sunny day. There was no time to grab binocs, but it was unnecessary since it was so close overhead.

Similar species and how eliminated: Even going to town can have its rewards sometimes! Not a Merlin because it was not dark underneath with strongly barred tail - only a Prairie Falcon because of its dark axillars & underwing coverts.
Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: bright sun, behind me as bird flew north, 25-30' closest distance. No optical equipment - only my eyes.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen a few Prairie Falcons before, as well as Merlin & Peregrines; many Kestrels.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

NoneHow long before field notes made? 1/2 an hour this form completed? April 13, 1990

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