

Prairie Falcon  
15 Mar 1980  
De Soto NWR, Harrison Co., IA  
\*R. Cummins  
IBL 50:46, 52:42

Record Number: 80-05  
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Raymond L. Cummins

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 50:46  
Records Committee: IBL 52:42

VOTE: 2 Yes, 5 No

No, Axillaries not seen. Observer has doubts.

No, Prob was but as observer suggests, can't eliminate immat.

Peregrine.

No, The most diagnostic mark, the black axillaries, not seen.

Yes, Appropriate habitat/season. Pale brown back does not rule out imm. Peregrine, but should have a heavy 'sideburn'.

Yes, Convincing description even though he had doubt, I don't feel reasonable doubt.

Equivocal No, Although the light coloration should separate from imm. Peregrine, lack of info on axillars raises doubt. However in w. Ia at correct season, prob acceptable.

probably cannot eliminate immature Peregrine, did not see diagnostic

axillaries, observer has doubts

1. Species PRAIRIE FALCON NOT accepted 9-20-80 80-5  
by Records Comm - See 2. Number 1

3. Location 1 MILE EAST OF DESOTA NWR, MISSOURI VALLEY, IOWA

4. Date: 3-15-80 5. Time Bird Seen: 8:22 A.M. to 8:27 A.M.

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):

The bird was crow size and definitely larger than the 3 American Kestrels seen during the trip. The bird had long-pointed wings and a thin very slightly rounded tail in flight. The bird had a completely light brown top side, back, wings, & tail. The chest was white viewed through 7x35 binoculars at 200-300 yds in good light. The face markings of this bird appeared to be dark above the eye - lighter below the eye with a possible faint vertical black mark. The face of the bird was seen through a 20x spotting scope at 150-200 yds in poor light making the facial markings more an impression of what I saw than a fact. I feel positive the bird was a large falcon, but because I did not observe the black axillaries and the fact that I have never seen a peregrine falcon I don't feel qualified to eliminate an immature peregrine falcon.

7. Description of voice, if heard: NOT HEARD

The most striking behavioral character was the bird's extremely swift-direct flight.

8. Description of behavior: It is the fastest bird I have observed. On about a 400 yds hunting run, at the end of which a Meadowlark was attacked (not taken), the bird only flew 5-10 ft above the ground. After missing the Meadowlark it landed in the plowed field.

9. Habitat - general: MISSOURI RIVER BOTTOM LAND 1 MILE EAST OF DESOTA BEARS NWR

specific: FLAT OPEN FARM LAND - EXCEPT FOR ROAD DITCHES & OCCASIONAL NARROW FENCE ROWS.

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

The sparrow hawk and pigeon hawk are eliminated by the large size. The Peregrine Falcon by the light brown top side.

11. Distance (how measured)? 30-40 yds when first sighted as it flew from a telephone pole. 150-200 yds as it perched in a large tree and about 200-300 yds as it stood on the ground facing us. (Estimates) 12. Optical equipment: 20x Spotting Scope 7x35 BINOCULARS

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): The light was good as it made its hunting run & excellent as it set in the field on the west side of the road.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: I have previously never seen a large falcon. The only falcons I have seen are the pigeon hawk & many sparrow hawks, including 3 on this day.

15. Other observers: Wally Jardine, Thaine Hopkins

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:

BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA - CONSULTED DURING OBSERVATION  
FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF TEXAS & AUDUBON WATER BIRD GUIDE DURING WRITE

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 3-17-80

Signature: Raymond L Cummins Address: 204 NW 12th Street

Date: 3-17-80 City, State: POCAHONTAS, IOWA 50574