

FALL SEASON, 1985 IOWA BIRD REPORTS

FROM: RICH DE COSTER, 4751 N. PAULINA, #2, CHICAGO, IL 60640

TO: TOM KENT, 211 RICHARDS ST., IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240

Dear Tom,

I had a good morning of viewing hawks on the Coralville Reservoir area on 14 September. However none were seen in Iowa City proper later in the morning.

Rich DeCoster

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11/20/85

BROAD-WINGED HAWK: A total of approximately 500 of this species was seen between 10:15 and 10:45 am the morning of 14 September as detailed below.

2 kettles of 50 birds at 10:15 am along Swan Lake road (along the southern border of Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Johnson Co.) just west of Interstate 380 overpass.

5 kettles of 250 birds total along same road between I-380 overpass and intersection with old US 218 highway.

(1 kettle of 7 turkey vultures was also seen from along this road.)

Numerous smaller kettles were observed as I drove south on old US218 to its intersection with I-280. A minimum of 200 birds, all apparently broad-wings, was tallied.

MERLIN: 1 adult male at Babcock Lake area on Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Johnson Co., on 14 September.

I had not previously identified this species in Iowa but have seen roughly twenty birds from Pt. Reyes, Calif., various points in Duluth, Minn., and most recently along the Chicago, Ill., lakefront.

I first noticed three small hawks interacting about 200 yards south of a parking area at Babcock Lake. The sun-bird-observer angle was rather poor at roughly 120°. One bird was a sharp-shinned hawk, one a merlin and the third was not identified before it vanished. The merlin subsequently flew low over the oxbow and provided an excellent look before flying off to a perch far north of the parking area. The points observed in the field are noted below.

When seen south of the parking lot the falcon shape with large head, long tail, and long wings was seen. The folded wings extended roughly 2/3 the length of the tail. The cere and legs were dark yellow. The eye color could not be observed. The upper-parts were dark. Several times as the birds interacted the tail of the suspected Merlin was "well seen" to have several dark transverse bars and appeared to lack any rufous or light brown coloration.

The bird was seen in good light at roughly 40 yards as it flew north along the oxbow at the west edge of the parking area. The falcon-shaped wings (rather long and pointed) and the dark bluish tail with dark transverse bands were observed. No strong mustache markings were seen during the short flyby.

The bird did not wag its tail when it landed on a snag far out in the reservoir. I have noticed that kestrels usually bob their tails when they land but have never (based on few observations) seen a Merlin do so when they first reach a perch.