

197-01-1993

REPORT OF AN UNCOMMON OR RARE SPECIES AND/OR HIGH NUMBERS

SPECIES: Merlin , Falco columbarius

OBSERVER(S) WRITING ACCOUNT: Paul Schwalbe

OTHER OBSERVERS: Glenna Schwalbe

DATE: 14 July 1993

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 15 April 1993

LOCATION: South Avis, Clinton Co., PA

SIGNIFICANCE OF OBSERVATION: First known record for Clinton Co., Pa.

CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH OBSERVATION WAS MADE: We were walking west on a back road that parallels the Susquehanna River. It was about 10:30 a.m., so the sun was mostly behind us. On the south side of the road there is a strip of woodland about 75 to 100 ft. wide that lies between it and the river. On the north side of the road there was a large corn field, which was only last years stubble at that time of the year. We noticed a small bird skulking through the corn stubble which turned out to be a Vesper Sparrow. This was our first vesper for the year so we stopped to look at it. The bird was only about 20' in front of us, our backs were to the woods. We both heard a "swish" over our heads, and a bird much larger than the sparrow appeared in field of the binoculars. It was obviously a hawk after the sparrow, and was about the size of a sharp-shinned. We don't know if it had been perched in the woods or had just arrived where we were. The sparrow quickly jumped back, flew a little to the left, then up into the trees behind us. The hawk banked, turned and gave chase for about two yards, made a second pass, missed, turned again and flew away to our right. The hawk was in view for about 15-20 seconds.

DESCRIPTION: As indicated above, the bird was about the size of a Sharp-shinned Hawk. It was brown above with a heavily streaked breast and banded tail. Our first thought was of an immature sharp-shinned, but the heavy robust body was very impressive, it was not slim as a sharp-shinned would be. When it banked and turned, its pointed wings were obvious, and with the tail spread, the light bands were seen to be much narrower than the dark brown bands. The face appeared to be rather uniformly colored. Its flight was strong and fast.

ELIMINATION OF OTHER SPECIES: The Kestrel has a reddish back and tail, reddish or blue wings, and a strongly contrasted face pattern, none of which was true for this bird. The Sharp-

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shinned Hawk is slimmer in body, has short rounded wings, and the tail bands are of equal width, or even with the light bands being a little wider than the dark bands, just the opposite of this bird.

EXPERIENCE: Both observers watched a similarly plumaged Merlin in their back yard a few years ago, and spent at least a week at the Cape May observatory in early October for the past four years, during which time many Merlins were observed. A Merlin was also enjoyed on Long Island by both observers some years ago.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: The B & L, 8 X 42 Elite.

Signed

Paul Schwalbe Prima P. Schwalbe

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

Date of Sighting: 15 April 1993 to 15 April 1993

Location: SOUTH AVIS

County: CLINTON

Observer(s): Paul & Glenna Schwalbe

Date of Submission: 1993

Submitted by: Paul & Glenna Schwalbe

Written Description: YES Photo: NO Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella		X						
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			←					X
J. Skinner			X					
TOTALS		1	6					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

J. C. Haas

Date:

2-23-94
~~10-27-93~~