

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 17555

October 14, 1997

Ken and Beth Marshall
RR 1, Box 146-G
Indiana, PA 15701

Dear Ken and Beth,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Snail Kite you saw at Yellow Creek S.P. on 8 September 1996 to P.O.R.C. After careful review and much discussion, we regret that we are unable to accept this record. There was concern within the committee that the description submitted did not completely rule out the possibility of similar species, especially Northern Harrier or even an escaped falconer's Harris' Hawk.

This of course, does not mean the bird was not a Snail Kite, merely, that the record is not beyond reasonable doubt for acceptance

We hope that this does not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rare birds you find in the future. Please be encouraged to send as much detail as possible when submitting a report.

Sincerely,

Nick Pulcinella
Chairman

Record # 170-01-1996

17C-01 -1996

POCC

SNAIL KITE?

1996

On September 8, while birding at Yellow Creek State Park we (Ken and Beth Marshall) spotted an unusual bird which was unlike anything we had ever seen. On September 6 Tropical Storm Fran had gone through the area. By the time it reached Indiana County the high winds and rain had subsided and it was a relatively mild weather episode here. In the two days following the 7th many rare coastal and southern birds were spotted locally.

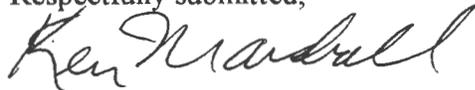
September 8 was hot and humid with hazy sunshine. We got to Yellow Creek about 2:00 p.m. As we turned into the gate at the day use area, we spotted what appeared to be a crow-sized buteo circling overhead. We stopped short for a closer look because the bird seemed to be very dark for a hawk. It flew in small circles moving east, flapping its wings several times, then gliding for a short distance. At first glance it seemed all black, but with binoculars we were able to see white on about 1/4 to 1/3 of the tail where it attached to the body and a thin white line at the tip. Otherwise the tail was solid black, no banding at all. There was some variation in the dark color on the body, dark grey and black, and also on the wings, flight feathers dark grey. No white on the wings or body. The beak was bent like a hawk's, not long like a crow. We could not see any color on the beak (it was a dark outline) or see the legs.

The wings were spread at the tips like a buteo's (not pointed) and the bird appeared wider from wing-tip to wing-tip than it was long. Compact body. Didn't notice it carrying its wings on a dihedral.

The bird was under observation overhead for about two or three minutes.

We are somewhat at a loss to decide what this could have been. The lack of banding on the tail would seem to eliminate all the likely hawks. The bird was too small to have been a melanistic red-tailed hawk. Many of the field marks and the flight pattern do seem to match the descriptions of snail kites.

Respectfully submitted,





Ken and Beth Marshall

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*)

Date of Sighting: 8 September 1996 to 8 September 1996

Location: YELLOW CREEK STATE PARK

County: INDIANA

Observer(s): Ken & Beth Marshall

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Ken & Beth Marshall

Written Description: YES

Photo: NO

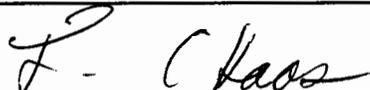
Specimen: NO

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 | | |
| S. Feldstein | | | | | | X | | |
| TOTALS | | | | | 1 | 3 | 3 | |
| DECISION | | | | | | X | | |

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

8-16-97