

171-01-2001

**Species:** Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

**Date:** Monday, May 28, 2001

**Place:** Breezyview Overlook, about a mile south of Chickies Rock County Park in Lancaster County. The overlook is situated between the towns of Columbia and Marietta, just off Route 441, immediately before the Little People Day Care Center on the left-hand side of the road. The view from the overlook takes in the Susquehanna River and the adjacent river hills in York County to the west; Chickies Rock itself, Marietta Borough and some farmlands and hills to the north; and the adjacent river hills and fields on the Lancaster County side of the river to the east. The view directly south is mostly obstructed by the trees atop the ridge.

**Observers:** Joseph Yoder, 1545 Northway Road, Apt. 8, Williamsport, PA 17701, (570) 323-5716; Meredith Lombard, 1451 Mt. Pleasant Road, Columbia, PA 17512, (717) 426-3922. Another observer who saw the birds for a brief period is Tim Altieri, a naturalist for the Lancaster County Environmental Center, 3 Nature's Way, Lancaster, PA 17602, (717) 295-2055.

**Experience of Observers:** I (Joseph Yoder) have been an avid birder for more than a decade, and I am the Hawk Migration Association of North America compiler for the White Deer Ridge Spring Hawk Watch, located near Williamsport, PA, on North White Deer Ridge in Lycoming County. Meredith Lombard's experience is similar, and she and I have been "regulars" for a number of years at Waggoner's Gap fall hawk watch near Carlisle, PA.

**Number of birds observed:** Two (one for approximately 30 minutes; the other remained in the area for 90 minutes, though it was out of our view on a few occasions toward the end of the viewing period, obscured by trees to the south and southeast).

**Ages:** Both were subadults ("first summer" birds).

**Time of Day:** 3:55 to 5:25 p.m. (DST).

**Conditions:** Mostly sunny; cloud cover approximately 20 percent (cumulus) with haze-free skies; moderate (estimated 10-15 mph) northwest winds; temperature approximately 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Optical Equipment:** Swarovski 7X42 SLC roof prism binoculars (both Meredith Lombard and Joseph Yoder), as well as a Bushnell Spacemaster spotting scope (15-45X zoom eyepiece) with a Bogen 3211 tripod and 3130 micro fluid head.

**Overview:** The first bird was spotted at 3:55 p.m., gliding just above tree-top level at Chickies Rock, approximately a mile away from the lookout. It gained altitude and then began moving directly toward the lookout, sailing and gliding as it caught insects and ate them on the wing. The second bird appeared within the same binocular field of view in approximately five minutes, also gracefully swooping and diving as it snagged insects. Slowly nearing the lookout, both birds dropped to a much-lower altitude (just above tree-top level again) affording us a spectacular view in the scope and binoculars. Both could be seen easily with the naked eye at this point. After 10-15 minutes of low-altitude, back-and-forth flying (while continuing to catch and eat insects on the wing), both birds soared higher and started moving slightly to the north of the lookout. One bird remained in that general vicinity overhead for about 20-30 minutes before venturing slowly to the east. It was seen periodically above the eastern horizon until 5:25 p.m. The other bird veered to the west much sooner, and was last seen crossing the river towards York County at a high altitude. The birds' distinctive, buoyant flight characteristics, their field marks (easily visible because of the proximity and the excellent viewing conditions) and the considerable amount of time they spent within view facilitated the identification.

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**Field Marks Observed:** Both birds exhibited subadult plumage. The gray breast and belly (with just a hint of brown on both birds) showed no signs of juvenile streaking. Both birds showed the retained juvenile tail with the thin, pale tail bands clearly visible. The heads of both birds were pale gray with no apparent streaking. The underwing coverts were grayish-brown, showing some obvious molt from the brown juvenile plumage. The retained juvenile secondaries were noticeably dark above and below. Both birds featured long, splayed and squared-off tails, with long, pointed wings. The outermost primary was noticeably short, approximately one-half the length of the longest primary. The wingspan was judged to be about 3 feet. The cere on both birds was gray.

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**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Tabulation Form - Round One**

Species: Mississippi Kite ( Ictinia mississippiensis)

Date of Sighting: 28 May 2001 to 28 May 2001

Location: CHICKIES ROCK COUNTY PARK

County: LANCASTER

Observer(s): Joseph Yoder, Meredith Lombard

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Joseph Yoder

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

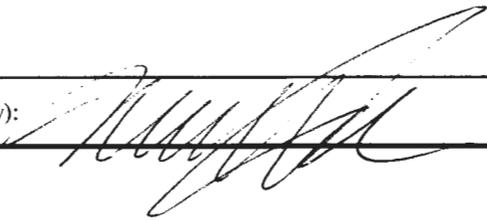
Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member                                | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A |            |            |         | Abstain |
|---------------------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
|                                       |         |          |           |            | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V |         |
| G. Armistead                          |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |
| D. Couchman                           |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |
| P. Hess                               |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |
| J. Stanley                            |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |
| B. Reid                               |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |
| <del>P. Rodewald</del><br>B. Leberman |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |
| M. Sharp                              |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |
| TOTALS                                |         |          | 7         |            |            |            |         |         |
| DECISION                              |         |          | X         |            |            |            |         |         |

Comments: 7/0/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

11/7/01