

171-04-2001

Mississippi Kite, Penn-Bern Rd, Blue Marsh Gamelands, Berks
County, PA 5/24/01
reported by Katrina Knight

I first spotted this bird sitting perched at the top of a tree from a distance. My initial impression was of a medium-sized dark raptor with a white head. The bird was obviously not the right shape for an accipiter - the tail was too short and the body shape just didn't quite fit and it seemed too small for a Red-tail, as well as having a white head. It was too big and had the wrong markings for a kestrel. The dark chest and the small size ruled out Osprey. It was obviously too small and not bulky enough for an eagle. The white head and general shape and size seemed wrong for a harrier. That eliminated the raptors I commonly see in that area. It did not seem to have the right coloration for any other buteo either. I slowly approached it. As I was approaching it appeared that the bird had a forked tail. Eventually, I got to within a 100 feet or so, where I could see that what I had initially thought was the tail was actually long, pointy wings whose tips went past the end of the tail. By this point it was also obvious that the bird had a gray back and chest with a darker tail. The bill also appeared relatively small for a raptor. At this point I had no doubt that this bird was a Mississippi Kite, which I have seen and observed at length on multiple previous occasions in Florida. I watched the perched bird for at least 15 minutes before it took off and slowly circled around overhead, gradually getting higher and then flying off toward the lake and out of sight. In flight, the bird appeared pointy-winged and somewhat like a falcon in shape, but with a slightly notched tail. and its flight was graceful without much flapping once it was away from the perch, very unlike a falcon's more powerful flight. At the time the bird flew off, I was attempting to use my cell phone to call some other local birders over to see it, so my views of it in flight were mostly naked-eye rather than with my binoculars. I could not see any stripes in the tail, which should make the bird an adult. I could see some white in the wings on the upper side when it turned, but I mainly saw it from below and am not completely sure whether it had the white secondaries of a full adult or just spots where new feathers were coming in on a sub-adult. The bird was definitely not an immature, being gray, not brown on the back and plain gray, not streaked on the breast. I believe the bird was a male, due to the very light color of the head.

Summary of description: Medium-size, white head, gray back and chest with darker, notched tail, long, pointed wings.

Total length of sighting: 20-25 minutes

Weather conditions: warm, no precipitation, some clouds but not heavy cloud-cover, light breeze.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Mississippi Kite (Ictinia mississippiensis)

Date of Sighting: 24 May 2001 to 24 May 2001

Location: BLUE MARSH GAMELANDS

County: BERKS

Observer(s): Katrina Knight

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Katrina Knight

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. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X		SL			
R. Leberman			X					
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

1/18/03