

August 26, 2005

Bill Etter

Thank you for submitting the description of the Mississippi Kite seen on April 23, 2003 at SGL 157 in Haycock Township. The report was voted 5-1 as **Class IV-A: A record for which there exists a majority of evidence in support of the observer's identification; the record is probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubt.**

This observation was brief and partial which was the main reason it was voted IV-A. Several committee members wanted to see mention of a banded tail, brownish underwing coverts, or a shorter outermost primary. For what it is worth no-one thought the bird had been mis-identified, just not seen well enough for a definite record.

Thanks again for sending in the description.

Sincerely

Matt Sharp
Chair: Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

Documentation for the PORC

171-02-2002

Species: Mississippi Kite

Number: 1

Sex, age, plumage: Sub-adult

Date: 23 April, 2002.

Location: State Gamelands #157, Haycock Twp., in northern Bucks County.

Observer:

Bill Etter

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Perkasie, PA 18944

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215-258-0229

Habitat:

The bird was seen over a wooded area on Mt Haycock, which is the highest point along a ridge that runs across the top of Bucks County.

Conditions:

Skies bright but partly cloudy, light wind from NW. Observed at approximately 5:30 PM.

Distance + Optics:

Bird was within 100-300 feet, and viewed with 10x24 binoculars.

Description:

While I was walking down Mt Haycock on SGL157, a small raptor appeared in flight just over the treetops about 200-300 feet ahead of me. At first sight, without the aid of binoculars, I had the impression that it was a Peregrine Falcon, based on size and general shape. With the aid of the binoculars, I noted slim and pointed wings with noticeably extended primary feathers. The flight was stiff and bouncy. Plumage was dark (gray to brown) overall, with a faintly streaked grayish breast. Head was fairly small and light brown to gray. I also noted a smallish hooked bill. The bird flew to my right, coming within 100 feet, and passed quickly to the north. The entire encounter lasted only about 15-20 seconds, but conditions afforded me a decent view as the bird passed.

Differentiation from similar species:

The slim wing shape alone eliminates similarly sized accipiters or buteos such as Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, or Broad-winged Hawk. Larger size further eliminates smaller falcons such as Merlin or American Kestrel, but not Peregrine. Peregrine Falcon is eliminated by the flight pattern of the bird, which was stiff and bouncy, not strong and fluid as might be expected from a Peregrine on the move. This species is further eliminated by the definite lack of anything resembling a hood.

Behavior:

Bird appeared to be migrating north. This was a particularly good day for migrating raptors here, and at other locations in SE PA. I have read that Mississippi Kites are known to pluck prey from the treetops. This bird may very well have been attempting to do this. Many passerines high in the trees raised alarm calls as the bird passed.

Vocalizations: None

Supporting evidence: None

Previous experience:

My only other encounter with this species was with an immature Mississippi Kite at Nockamixon State Park in May 2001. A description of that bird was forwarded to PORC last summer.

Certainty of identification: I am confident in my identification of this bird.

References consulted: I checked several field guides (Peterson, National Geographic, and especially Sibley) as well as a few other photographic sources.

Date of report: 10 July, 2002. Information is taken from my notes, which were made immediately following the sighting.

Signature of observer:

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

Date of Sighting: 23 April 2002 to 23 April 2002

Location: SGL 157 HAYCOCK TOWNSHIP

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Bill Etter

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Bill Etter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No


Specimen: No

Recording: NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
G. Armistead				X				
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Guris					X			
J. Stanley				X				
E. Witmer				X				
R. Leberman								
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS			1	4	1			
DECISION				X				

Comments: 1/5

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

4/1/04