

171-01-2005

Documentation for the PORC

Species: Mississippi Kite

Number: 1

Sex, age, plumage: Adult, female

Date: Saturday, 14 May, 2005

Location: Nockamixon State Park in northern Bucks County.

Observer:

Bill Etter

1030 Old Bethlehem Road #2

Perkasie, PA 18944

etter@netcarrier.com

215-964-3613

Habitat:

The bird was seen soaring over Mt Haycock, which is the highest point along a ridge that runs across the top of Bucks County. This is a rural, mostly forested area.

Conditions:

Bright skies with partial cloud cover, light wind from SW. Observed at approximately 18:00.

Distance + Optics:

The bird was as close as 200 feet (directly overhead), but seen from various distances and at many angles. Viewed with 10x24 binoculars and 78mm scope at 30x.

Description:

While birding for the PAMC, I was about to get in my car near Nockamixon's experimental pond along 563 when I saw a bird far to the north and heading toward me over Mt Haycock. I watched it through binoculars, and as it approached, my mental identification quickly progressed from 'early rising nighthawk' to 'odd looking gull' to 'lazy falcon', then I realized for sure what I was actually looking at. It approached to within 500 feet. I was still viewing it through binoculars, and could clearly see many field marks that indicated Mississippi Kite: bouncy flight, size (compared to grackles), general shape (long, usually fanned tail, long pointed wings with distinctly extended primary feathers at the end of each), and coloration (overall gray). I ended up slowly following the bird down the shoulder of Rt 563 in my car for several minutes, stopping to enjoy extended views through the scope as the bird passed directly overhead on two occasions. Luckily, it followed the road for some reason...I'd catch up to it, stop, focus in the scope, watch, repeat. The kite was in no hurry, bouncing around randomly and attempting to catch insects on the wing. There was neither barring on the tail nor brown in the plumage, indicating an adult. Furthermore, the overall color of the kite was a uniform gray with no noticeable bright patches, indicating a female bird.

Differentiation from similar species:

Wing shape alone eliminates similarly sized accipiters or buteos such as Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, or Broad-winged Hawk. Details of plumage (all gray, definite lack of hood), and bouncy, often random flight pattern eliminate all falcons. Other kites such as White-tailed and Swallow-tailed are eliminated by lack of white in the bird, as well as by many other obvious details.

Behavior:

As the bird flew around, it paused to "kite" twice, and made a few grabs with both feet, presumably at passing insects. Its course appeared to be random, though it was headed southwest when I lost track of it.

Vocalizations: None

Supporting evidence: None

Previous experience:

I have seen approximately five Mississippi Kites in the Bucks Co / Hunterdon Co NJ area of the past five years. I have also watched them in Texas on a few occasions.

Certainty of identification: I am 100% confident in my identification of this bird.

References consulted: I looked at my Sibley guide once the bird disappeared to review the difference between male and female Mississippi kite.

Date of report: 18 May 2005.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

Date of Sighting: 14 May 2005 to 14 May 2005

Location: NOCKAMIXON STATE PARK

County : BUCKS

Observer(s): Bill Etter

Date of Submission: 2005

Submitted by: Bill Etter

Written Description: Yes

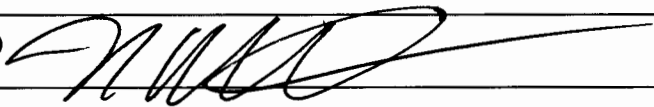
Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | Abstain |
|--|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
| R. Wiltraut | | | X | | | | | |
| D. Heathcote <i>Gulwitz</i> | | | X | | | | | |
| P. Guris | | | X | | | | | |
| J. Stanley | | | X | | | | | |
| E. Witmer | | | X | | | | | |
| R. Leberman <i>Hefler</i> | | | X | | | | | |
| M. Sharp | X | | | | | | | |
| TOTALS | 1 | | 6 | | | | | |
| DECISION | | | X | | | | | |

Comments: *sto 7to*

Signature (Secretary) 

Date: *6/25/06*