



Species: Mississippi Kites (2)

Date: June 2 and 3, 2007

Location: Corner Rd., just southeast of Big Cove Tannery (Fulton County), PA

Observers: Tom Johnson and Dan Snell

At about 12:35 PM on June 2, 2007, while doing breeding bird atlas work, I spotted a smallish raptor circling with vultures low over Corner Road in Big Cove Tannery, Fulton County, PA. I stopped the car to look at it with my binoculars as it was banking; I immediately noted the bird's distinctive long-winged and long-tailed profile as well as the pale greater secondary covert bar visible on the upperwing and called "Mississippi Kite!!" to Dan Snell who was with me. I pulled the car up directly under the kite and grabbed my camera out of the backseat, as I've seen several kites in PA without having a method of documenting them. I fired off some documentation shots, noting in addition the extremely shortened outer primary on each wing. Then, I took my eye out of the viewfinder of the camera and noticed a second identical raptor soaring in the same kettle as the first kite and the vultures. This was also a Mississippi Kite. Both birds had pale gray heads, were quite dark overall on their underparts with a strong banded pattern on the tail and mottled rusty and gray underwings. These features, in addition to the pale greater secondary covert bar on the upperwing, allowed me to age these kites as subadult, or first spring (hatched the previous summer). The two kites kettled up with the vultures and several first spring Broad-winged Hawks, feeding on flying insects as they rose in altitude on a thermal. Eventually they got too high to see and drifted off to the west. The weather was hot (86 degrees Fahrenheit), humid, and hazy, the perfect combination for kite searching.

The next day, June 3, 2007, I returned to the site in late morning. After a brief period of scanning vulture flocks, I noticed a raptor rising from the creek bottom to the south in the distance. This turned out to be a subadult Mississippi Kite, indicating that at least one of the two birds stuck around overnight. I watched the bird for about 20 minutes as it fed on the wing in the distance. A thunderstorm and sustained afternoon rain and cool temperatures put a damper on kite searching for the rest of the afternoon.

I have experience with other Mississippi Kites in Pennsylvania in spring as well as many birds in Texas and elsewhere in the southeast. I have also seen numerous Plumbeous Kites in Argentina; these are closely related to Mississippi and strongly resemble Mississippi in some regards.

The date of this sighting falls into the typical pattern of spring overshoots seen in PA given in *Birds of Pennsylvania* (Brauning/ McWilliams). Though the habitat surrounding the area hosting the kites seems appropriate for potential breeding, and kites breed as close to PA as West Virginia, it seems likely that these two individuals represent overshoot migrants instead of prospecting breeders (though I feel that breeding of Mississippi Kite in Pennsylvania will be confirmed in the near future as the species' population continues to expand in United States (in the Southeast and lower Midwest).

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

Date of Sighting: 2 June 2007 to 3 June 2007

Location: FULTON

County : BIG COVE TANNERY

Observer(s): Tom Johnson, Dan Snell

Date of Submission: 2007

Submitted by: Tom Johnson

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

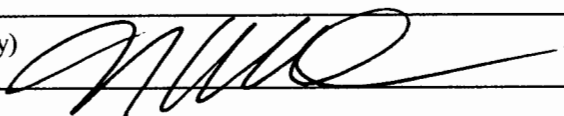
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
B. Coulter	X							
E. Witmer	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

12/6/07