

Pennsylvania Rare Bird Report Form

Species (common & scientific): Mississippi Kite, *Ictinia mississippiensis*

Number of Individuals: 1 **Sex(es):** Unknown

Age(s) & Plumage(s): Unknown, but in some stage of molt as several of the primaries were missing or displaced.

Dates Seen: 5/24/11 **Time:** 16:40

Where Seen (Town/County): Tincum Township, Bucks County

Exact Location: Giving Pond Recreation Area, Delaware Canal State Park

Observer Reporting:

Name: Paul A. Cooper

Address: 17 Rock Ridge Road, Upper Black Eddy, PA 18972

E-mail: pcooper@princetonhydro.com

Telephone (optional):

Other Observers (Only those who saw & identified the bird with you): None

Distance to Bird: At closest maybe 50 yards west, probably 150 to 200 feet in the air

Viewing Conditions (Sky, weather, position of sun relative to you): Good viewing, bright skies, other than initially silhouetted was well lit

Optical Equipment Used: Nikon Monarch 12x42

Habitat: Delaware River Floodplain, over a scrub/shrub, riparian forest, and impounded quarry

Description (only what you observed; size relative to other species present; posture, body shape & proportions; colors & patterns of plumage; bill, eye, & leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual):

A medium-sized raptor with fairly long wings. As mentioned above, appeared to be molting as several of the flight feathers were missing or displaced. What was most distinct was the all black, squared tail which contrasted with the uniform grey of the body and head, without markings, although it may have been graded lighter towards the head. The wings were a darker grey, but lighter than the black tail. The secondaries were somewhat translucent when overhead. The wings were generally pointed but somewhat bent.

Behavior (Be as specific as possible about what the bird was doing):

The bird was flying rapidly north, parallel to the Delaware River. There was no deviation in course or height during the sighting. The flight was somewhat buoyant. Overall the sighting was relatively short, maybe 45 seconds to a minute in total, but less where it was in a range to pick out details, as the bird was moving fast.

Vocalizations: None.

Supporting Evidence if Any (include with report): None.

Photo:

Video Recording:

Audio Recording:

Drawing:

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Name, Address, e-mail, telephone (optional) of photographer, etc.

Separation from Similar Species (How you eliminated others):

At first glance, when silhouetted, my initial instinct was Osprey, which are common at this location, and I observed one later that day. However, it was smaller than an Osprey, had a different look when it approached, and of course lacked the patterned wings and tail, facial markings, and white belly of the Osprey. It lacked the long broad wings of Buteos, and the short rounded wings of Accipiters. Another thought was possibly a Peregrine Falcon, but it certainly lacked any facial markings characteristic of falcons. The flight style, particularly the buoyancy, was somewhat reminiscent of a gull, as well as the size, but the plumage, especially the all black tail does not match any of the local gulls, and it lacked the large bill of a gull, which I had not seen at the site for a month at that point.

Discussion (Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it): Around the same time there had been other reports of Mississippi Kites in southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, including as close as Northampton County, within 15 miles.

Previous Experience with this and/or Similar Species:

None.

Are you positive of your ID? (Why or why not):

Despite this being my first sighting of this species, I have a high degree of confidence in my identification based on the plumage, shape, and flight pattern that I was able to see. As detailed above, I am certain that it was none of the other species I discussed.

References:

During Observation:

Sibley iPod app immediately after.

After Observation:

Sibley, Crossley, Peterson, National Geographic, and Stokes field guides.

Date of report: 7/1/2011.

Signature of Observer:



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis*

Date of Sighting: 24 May 2011 to 24 May 2011

County : BUCKS

Location : TINICUM TOWNSHIP

Observer(s): Paul Cooper

Date of Submission: 2011

Submitted by: Paul Cooper

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	
D. DeReamus			X					
A. Guarente			X					
T. Johnson			X					
B. Coulter			X					
R. Koury			X					
D. Weber			X					
G. Malosh			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary) Nick Pulcinella

Date: 1/21/12