

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2017-09-17 19:33:46
Observer's Name	Brian Wargo
E-mail	brianwargo@gmail.com
Phone	4127609585
Observer's Address	78 Fawnvue Drive McKees Rocks PA 15136-1070 United States
Names of additional observers	Barb Carrier
Species (Common Name)	Mississippi Kite
Species (Scientific Name)	<i>Ictinia mississippiensis</i>
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult
Observation Date and Time	09-16-2017 2:30 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Not yet (please do, eBird is great!)
County	Bedford
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Cairnbrook
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Allegheny Front Hawk Watch
GPS coordinates of sighting	N 40.08142, W -78.72783
Habitat	Hawkwatch
Distance to bird	Very high overhead
Viewing conditions	Partly cloudy becoming foggy/misty
Optical equipment used	Nikon 10.5 x 45 Binoculars and a 20-60 x Celestron Spotting Scope

Description

September 16, 2017 was a busy day at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. It was the peak of Broad-wing Hawk migration and an east wind made this a promising day. As expected, Broad-winged Hawks kept our large group busy. Because the east wind was weak, the birds were scattered all over the sky. Therefore, our spotters were scanning all angles.

High in the sky, slightly in front of us, was a Red-tailed Hawk. There was conversation about if we had already counted this bird, because the winds had just died down and we felt a rain drop or two. We all agreed that the Red-tail Hawk had been counted and it was just moving very slow due to the calming of the winds. Above the Red-tailed Hawk was another bird that was perplexing. I instructed the spotters to give it a look, and they were able to see it through their binoculars. No one, however, offered, a guess.

The bird apparently “stalled out” slightly behind us, almost hovering in place. I figured that I had time, and I did, to switch to my angled spotting scope. My first impressions of what I saw were this: It was Osprey like in that it was whitish, but its wings were not the correct shape. I saw these little hands, like a caricature of a Northern Goshawk's little hands. I yelled out to everyone, “Its got bad hands, its got bad hands.” What I meant by that was it looked like it had lost primaries 1-8, like someone had taken scissors and cut them off. But, at the same time, there looked like a nub was at the wrist. I knew it was not an Osprey, even though I tried over and over to make it into one. Overall the wings were very long like a Northern Harrier, but shaped more like Peregrine Falcon. I knew it was not a Northern Harrier, despite it having an adult male Northern Harrier ghostly white appearance. The tail was whitish and not long as a Northern Harrier. Since the bird was nearly hovering in space, and my neck was hurting, I switched back to binoculars and kept staring at the bird. I yelled out every bird it was not. I tried yelling to Jeanine Ging, who had a 400 mm lens on her camera to try to take a picture of this bird, but she kept yelling back that, “It is just a Red-tailed Hawk,” which was the bird she was photographing. I kept insisting, “You’re on the wrong bird.”

The bird eventually got swallowed up in the misty clouds. I put down my binoculars and said, “what the hell was that bird?” No one offered anything. Everyone was perplexed. I asked our oldest and most veteran former counter, Gene Flament, who shrugged his shoulders. Barb Carrier, who viewed it the entire time, said, “it almost had a forked tail, but not really.”

Defeated, I walked over to Jerry Liguori's Hawks From Every Angle, which I almost have memorized. I knew what the bird was not and figured that I would look at the sections of the book I skip, because we do not have certain birds in our area. When I turned to page 101, I saw the exact bird I had seen (MK 02, adult on right taken by Mike Lanzone). I yelled confidently, here is our bird, held up the picture, and Barb Carrier came over, and said that that was the tail she was talking about.

I am very confident (above 95% confidence) that the bird I tracked was the bird pictured in the book (MK 02 right).

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

Soaring, almost effortlessly, high in the sky. Wings extended exactly as shown in MK 02 Adult (Jerry Liguori's Hawks From Every Angle).

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

I knew immediately this bird was not a raptor that we have seen before at Allegheny Front Hawk Watch.

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

Yes! The bird looked identical to the picture as shown in MK 02 Adult (Jerry Liguori's Hawks From Every Angle).

After

Jerry Liguori's Hawks From Every Angle.

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video
or drawings



MK 02 - Mississippi Kite (CO). Sub-adults (left) and adults (right) are grayish below with whitish head. Sub-adults have juvenile-like banded tail (which appears all dark when folded) and often show retained dark, juvenile remiges and underwing linings. Note narrow, pointed wings similar to those of falcons. Both photos © Mike Lanzone

[MK 02 \(Jerry Liguori's Hawks From Every Angle\)..bmp](#)

Click to edit

PORC-webform00427