

Mississippi Kite

5 Jun 1989

Dudgeon Lake area, Benton Co., IA

\*M.Preschooldt,\*S.Dinsmore,\*Kent,\*Bendorf

IBL 59:110, 61:85, Conrads 1989

Record Number: 89-19

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Mark Proescholdt, 6 Jun

Steve Dinsmore, 6 Jun

Thomas H. Kent, 6 Jun

Carl J. Bendorf, 7 Jun

Beth Proescholdt, 8 Jun

Jim Fuller, 8 Jun

Randy Pinkston, 8 Jun

Peter C. Petersen, 8 Jun

Diane Porter, 9 Jun

PHOTOGRAPHS

T. H. Kent, 6 June, P-0289 (IBL 59:120)

Jim Scheib, 8 June, P-0284 (IBL 59:120)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:110

Photographs: IBL 59:120 (P-0284, P-0289, Phelps)

Records Committee: 61:85

Conrads, D. J., M. Phelps, and T. H. Kent. 1989. Mississippi Kite at Dudgeon Lake. IBL 59:118-120.

VOTE: 7 A-P

A-P. Photos leave little doubt and descriptions are also conclusive.

A-P. Generally excellent documentations.

A-P. Photos and descriptions clearly indicate both were subadult Mississippi Kites.

A-P. All descriptions consistent for this species and with each other. Photos diagnostic.

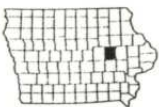
A-P. Photos confirm and document ID.

SENT TO: Mark and Beth Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148; Randy Pinkston, 308 Ronalds, Iowa City, IA 52245; Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, RR 6, Iowa City, IA 52240; Peter Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803; Diane Porter, 908 East Briggs, Fairfield, IA 52556.[9/28/89]

## MISSISSIPPI KITE AT DUDGEON LAKE

DAVID J. CONRADS, MARC PHELPS, THOMAS H. KENT

At 5:05 p.m. on 5 June 1989, Conrads and Phelps observed a gray raptor about the size of a small crow perched about 10 m up in a snag above a backwater slough in a floodplain forest on the Dudgeon Lake Game Area, Benton County. Their first assumption was that it was a Mississippi Kite. It was observed for approximately 10 minutes from a distance of 20 m with binoculars. Marc took several photographs as it sat facing the camera. The bird was completely gray underneath without markings. The tail was square-ended and had three dark bands on the underside. There appeared to be a black mask around the eyes, and its eyes were a brilliant orange-red. When approached for a closer photograph, it flew to the west. The absence of black shoulders and a white tail eliminated Black-shouldered Kite. The bird's silhouette in flight revealed pointed wings, quite similar to a falcon, but its body was slimmer and flight more buoyant than a falcon. It did not return that evening. Upon returning to the Benton County Conservation Office, using Clark and Wheeler (1987), the bird was identified as a subadult Mississippi Kite.

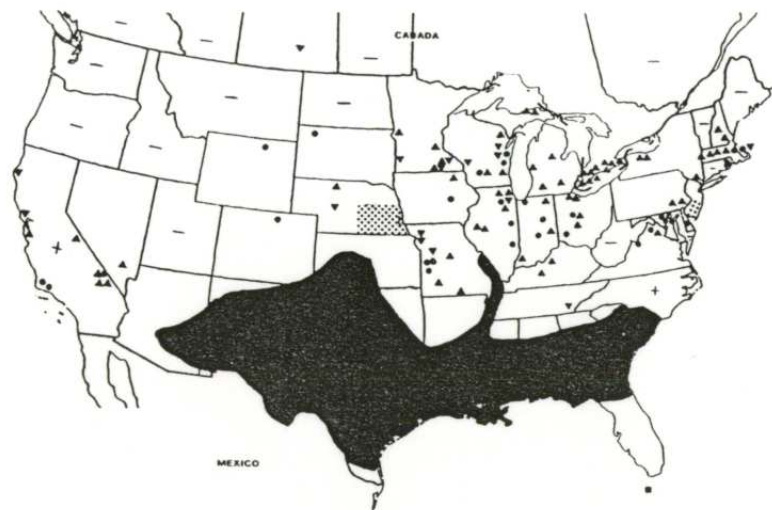


On 6 June at about 2:00 p.m., the authors found the bird again and noted the kite-like flight as it remained on the wing hunting insects for more than an hour. It sailed most of the time and was observed from about 50-400 m. The tail was square when not fanned, somewhat curved when fanned, and had four to six fine white bars on the underside. From above, the primaries were black and the rest of the underwing gray. The body appeared dark to gray, lighter toward the head. At one point we saw two kite-like birds, but could not make a positive identification of both. The kite had also been observed that morning by several others. Conrads and Phelps were unable to find the bird again on 7 June at about 7:00 p.m., but on 8 June two birds were found by Jim Fuller and Jim Scheib and photographed. The last sighting was on 9 June.

The Mississippi Kite occurred in Iowa before 1900 and was probably casual (Dinsmore et al. 1984). Although there have been three reported sightings since 1900 (Dinsmore et al. 1984), the only one besides the current record that has been accepted by the Records Committee is from 29 May 1978 at Cardinal Marsh, Winneshiek County (Kent and Silcock 1984).

In the 1950s, this species began to recover from a population decline that had occurred in the late 1800s (Parker and Ogden 1979). Since the 1950s there has been a steady increase in extralimital sightings of Mississippi Kite (map). The greatest number of northward strays are subadults found in mid-May through June with a much smaller fall peak in September. Mississippi Kites migrate to southern South America in winter. Winter records cited include a in Texas and one in the Florida Keys. There are February records from North and South Carolina. The early extralimital records are from Nevada in March and California and New Hampshire in early April. Two late October records are from New Jersey and Minnesota.

## Extralimital Records of Mississippi Kite



Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1	1	0	3	4	10	29	45	52			
1930s	1940s	1950s	1960-64	1965-69	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89			

The pattern of vagrancy involves the East Coast, the Midwest, and California (map). Iowa represents a relatively blank spot in the Midwest, suggesting the possibility that this species has been overlooked. Spring and fall sightings in southeast Nebraska now make the species regular there. Several of these sightings have been just across the river from Iowa.

The sighting at Dudgeon Lake is typical in that the birds were subadult, they were found in early June, and they spent their time kiting over or sitting silently in riparian woodland. The most likely spots for future sightings would seem to be along rivers in southwest and eastern Iowa.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Clark, W. H., and B. Wheeler. 1987. *A Field Guide to Hawks of North America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Dinsmore, J. J., T. H. Kent, D. Koenig, P. C. Petersen, and D. M. Roosa. 1984. *Iowa Birds*. Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press.
- Kent, T. H., and W. R. Silcock. 1984. Report of the I.O.U. Records Committee for 1984. *Iowa Bird Life* 55:56-58.
- Parker, J. W., and J. C. Ogden. 1979. The recent history and status of the Mississippi Kite. *Am. Birds* 33:119-129.

89-19

SLATY-BACKED GULL IN SCOTT COUNTY

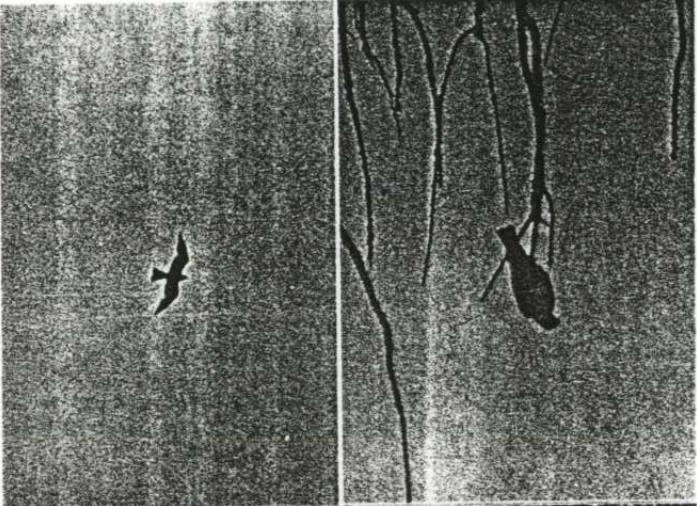
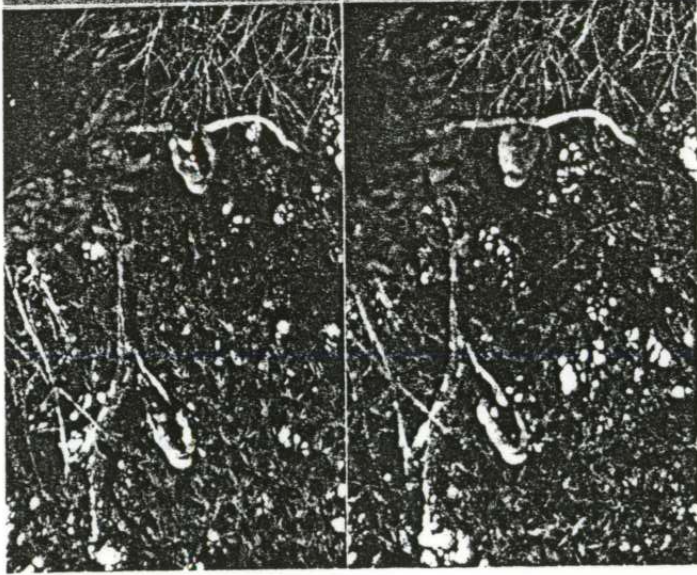
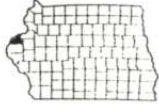
JAMES FULLER

On Sunday, February 12, Ann Barker reported a dark-mantled adult gull on the Mississippi River above Le Claire, Scott County, to the Iowa Birdline. She had surmised a Lesser Black-backed Gull, but could not rule out other dark-winged gulls because she had only been able to scope it floating down the river at 500 yards and so was not able to view leg color and wing pattern.

On a beautiful, clear Valentine's Day morning (February 14) I started searching for Ann's bird at Le Claire with no success and so continued downstream. At 10:40 a.m., I had reached the Moline, Illinois, waterfront and there at mid-river, all by itself, was a dark-mantled gull sitting on a rock seawall. It was in the identical location where I had seen my first Iowa Great Black-backed Gull in December 1986. Shortly after I got the bird in the scope, it took off and flew in a large circle. Then, wonder of wonders, it proceeded directly at me, finally settling down to stand with a group of Herring Gulls on shell ice a mere 60 yards away.

The first clue that this was not a Lesser Black-backed Gull was the bright pink legs and feet. The mantle and upper wings appeared dark grey, not black, and the bird's size and general head and bill shape were the same as that of the Herring Gull. As the bird walked around picking at shad in the ice, it stretched its wings and flew short distances several times. The wing had a very wide white trailing edge and what appeared to be an unusual pattern of white areas at the wing tip. At this point, feeling that the bird was very possibly a Slaty-backed Gull, I roused Pete Petersen from his Wild Bird Shop. He put up the "gone birding" sign and grabbed his camera. After Pete confirmed the probable identification, we hurried off to pass the word.

Features of the bird as noted by several other observers, including Ann Barker, Tom Kent, and Pete Petersen, were as follows: The general size and posture was the same as that of the nearby Herring Gulls; head and relative bill size were also similar. The mantle and upperwing were quite dark. The crown and nape had fine streaking, typical of winter adult gulls, and the head, tail, and underparts were otherwise white. The bill was yellow with a subterminal red spot on the lower mandible. The eye was yellow and had a dark smudge around it, especially distally. Legs and feet were a bright pink, especially the feet, and differed from the gray-pink of the Herring Gull. The upper wing had a broad trailing edge of white and a very narrow leading edge. The trailing edge was apparent on the standing bird as a white area, which was larger than that of the adult Herring Gull. The outermost primary had a large (longer than wide) subterminal white area as well as a small white tip, with a narrow dark area between. Apical white spots were seen on all of the rest of the primaries through the 5th. The 8th through the 5th primaries also had subterminal white marks which became closer to the trailing edge, thus producing a white arc into the wing tip. The under surface of the wing was light compared to the upper surface and the flight feathers were an opaque gray. The pattern of white spots, although fainter, could also be seen on the underwing.



Subadult Mississippi Kites at Dudgeon Lake Area, 6-8 June 1989. Photos by Jim Schieb (top), Marc Phelps (lower left), and Tom Kent (lower right).

61-68



Mississippi Kite P-0284  
ne of Vinton, Benton Co., IA  
08 Jun 1988 Jim Scheib

89-19

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Mississippi Kite P-0284  
ne of Vinton, Benton Co., IA  
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Mississippi Kite P-0284  
ne of Vinton, Benton Co., IA  
08 Jun 1988 Jim Scheib

89-19

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What species? Mississippi Kite How many? 1Location? Dudgeon Lake area - N. of Vinton - (Benton Co.)Type of habitat? Riverbottom woods along Cedar River with pond and power line cutWhen? date(s): June 6, 1989 time: 6:33 a.m. 7:45 a.m. - with Steve  
11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - with EA, EA, JSWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Steve Dinsmore, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong, Jim Sinclairothers before or after you: Dave Conrads, Beth Proescholdt, Phyllis Harris, Carl Bendorf

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Steve and I walked to the power line cut area to the pond and there above us was this beautiful bird. This crow-sized bird had a light grayish head and a sharply hooked bill. Its back was a grayish-brownish color that was mottled with white splotches. Its blackish-brownish tail on the top side was notched. The underside of the tail was barred which showed when the bird flew. It had white undertail coverts. It was molting into adult plumage. Its breast was grayish. It had yellowish feet. When viewed closely, it had a yellowish rim around its eye with a dark iris. It was falcon-shaped in flight and had a graceful flight. It flew once with a Red-shouldered Hawk and was smaller in size in flight than the Hawk. It perched on dead trees or bare, dead branches. It stayed close to the pond most of the time. It was very unafraid and landed just over our heads once.

Similar species and how eliminated:

there really are no similar species. An adult Black-shouldered Kite is very distinctive and the immature does not have a barred tail.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

with Steve → mostly cloudy, 50 yards away in a 50' tall tree. later we were 30 yds. away + bird was in a tree 40'-50' high. In flight → 70-100 yds. away. later, bird was 50' high and we were 50-60 yards away. we had 22x scope and I had 8x30 Binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen Miss. Kites in Kansas - a number of them.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

R.T. Peterson's field guide, Robbins' Birds of N. America, Natl. Field guide

How long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? July 7, 1989  
the bird

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Mississippi Kite

How Many?1 sub-adult

Location?along the Cedar R. north of Vinton and adjacent to Dudgeon L. W.A.

Habitat?perched in dead snags in mature bottomland forest

Date?6 Jun 1989

Time?6:33-7:45 a.m.

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames

Others who saw bird:Dave Conrads, Mark Proescholdt, m.ob.

Description of bird:When first sighted, the bird was perched about 50-60 feet up in a dead snag. The head was pearl gray except for a darker mask that included the eye. The bill was dark, strongly hooked, and very stubby. The eye was yellow, iris dark. The mantle was slightly darker than the head with numerous whitish or beige patches scattered throughout. The mantle appeared to have a brownish rather than grayish cast to it. The wings were also dark gray with darker primaries. The tail was long and appeared dark when the bird was perched. The underparts were dull gray and contrasted with whiter undertail coverts. The legs were yellowish. The size of the bird was hard to determine, but it appeared to be about crow-sized.

Finally, at about 6:50 a.m., the kite flew to the southwest and landed in another snag. In flight, the wings were very long, narrow, and pointed. The underside of the wing appeared dark. The upperwing was dark gray with contrasting black primaries. In flight, the long tail was seen to have 3 or 4 lighter bands on an otherwise dark brown tail. While in flight, the kite would mostly glide, but occasionally flapped its wings, reminiscent of a harrier. Based on the plumage and yellow eye, the bird was identified as a subadult Mississippi Kite.

Similar species and how eliminated:The size, wing shape, dark mask, banded tail, and contrasting darker primaries eliminates other raptors, especially Black-shouldered Kite.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun mostly behind us. Estimated viewing distance was 20 yards at the closest. I used Bushnell 7x35 binoculars and a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:I have seen Mississippi Kites in Kansas and Florida, but have no experience with Black-shouldered Kite.

References consulted:NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made?while watching bird

How long before this form was completed?3 days

## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Mississippi Kite (1 subadult), 6 June 1989, Dudgeon L., Benton Co., IA

Observer: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

Other observers: with Marc Phelps, Dave Conrads, Steve Poe

Time: 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Habitat: wooded river bottom with backwater sloughs

Description: The bird was found last night at 5 p.m. by Conrads and Phelps on a dead tree and photographed. About 15 minutes after arriving in the area, Phelps and I spotted the bird flying. Over the next one and a half hours we saw the bird about eight times for 1 to 10 minutes flying over the slough and woods. We never saw it land. The bird was larger than a kestrel, perhaps as long a wing span as a Red-shouldered Hawk, certainly longer than a crow. The long bent, pointed wings, long narrow tail, slim body and sailing flight made it easy to spot. It was seen from 1/4 mile to about 150 ft. directly overhead. It sailed most of the time using the moderate south wind, but flapped some when changing directions. The tail was fanned at times. The tail was square when not fanned, mildly curved when fanned. The upper parts were a medium brown except for black primaries and a darker tail. Several narrow white bars were seen on the upper surface of the tail when the bird was low and banked against the trees. Most of the time the under surface of the wing appeared dark and nondescript with lighter brown wing coverts. Later, in good light the primaries could be seen to be black and the rest of the underwing gray. There was a smudged white mark between the primaries and secondaries that ran parallel to the body. The under side of the tail had four to six fine white bars that were more distinct and easier to see than those on the upper surface. The under tail coverts appeared lighter at some angles. The body appeared dark to gray and lighter toward the head. The head was a soft gray, lighter on the crown. We saw a dark mark through the eye. The bill was small, dark and hooked. At times the bird held its legs down as if grasping something. It may have been catching insects.

Song: not heard

Behavior: as above

Conditions: Most often seen sailing over the horizon, but circled over us on several occasions and once flew low at about 75 yards against the trees.

Sunny with contrasty lighting when over head and at a distance. 10x binoculars.

Similar species: Pointed wings and long square tail exclude buteos and accipiters. Slim body and sailing behavior typical of kite rather than a falcon. Markings not that of any falcon. Square tail excludes Swallow-tailed Kite. Lack of white tail and black shoulder excludes Black-shouldered Kite.

Agreement: yes

Previous experience: Have seen adults in Kansas and Arizona

References/time used: Looked at NG field guide before leaving home and after initial viewing.:

Time of notes/typed: Notes taken during observation; typed 4 hours later.



**MISSISSIPPI KITE**

7 June 1989  
8:15 to 8:25 AM  
Benton County, Iowa  
ca. 1 mi. n. Vinton

**Carl J. Bendorf**  
825 7th Ave.  
Iowa City, IA 52240

I arrived (alone) at 8 AM and walked about 300 yards west from highway 150 along a power line cut through mature deciduous woodland (river bottom near Cedar River). At this point there is a medium size pond and a clearing. After about 10 minutes of poking around the edge of the pond trying to get oriented, I realized the bird was sitting right above me in a bare tree. I don't know whether it was there all the time or if I just happened to be below its favorite roost when it came in unnoticed. I was looking north and the bird was facing me; the sky was clear and the bird was sitting in the full morning sun coming over my right shoulder. With my 10x Zeiss binoculars, I studied the bird for about 10 minutes before it suddenly took off and I quickly lost sight of it. I took notes (copy attached) as I watched the bird and wrote the following based on them about 3 hours later:

Slim gray hawk, perhaps the overall size of a Broadwing, but more slender. The top of the head and upper back was a very light pearly gray; the wings and back were a contrasting darker gray. I couldn't see the upper tail surface or the lower back from my angle. There appeared to be a few chestnut or brown feathers in the scapular area, and also a few scattered whitish feathers on the back and wings.

The bill was dark, quite short, and hooked. The pupil of the eye was dark and the iris appeared brown; there was some black feathering immediately around the eye and also in front of the eye to the base of the bill. The head was generally rounded and the eye (with the black feathering) appeared relatively large.

The breast was a medium gray (darker than the top of the head but lighter than the wings) and was relatively uniform in color except for some distinct white and also some darker gray or brownish feathers. The crissum area was uniform color but was lighter than the breast. The legs and feet were yellowish.

I would see the underside of the tail quite well and it was a dark gray brown with 2 distinctly lighter patches or bands subterminally (see sketch). The tail seemed to broaden a bit at the tip and was very slightly rounded. As shown in my crude sketch, these patches didn't seem to go all the way across the tail but were sort of confined to the middle third of the tail. I assume this was a function somehow of how the tail feathers are folded when the tail is not fanned out.

I could clearly see both wingtips extend past the end of the tail perhaps 1/2 inch as the bird faced me. From my view, the wingtips showing beyond the tip of the tail reminded me of photos of a Parasitic Jaegers can look with their small pointed central tail feathers.

The bird was very alert and turned its head around regularly (looking for Mississippi?) but was otherwise quite still. A few chickadees and a N. Oriole briefly stopped by and scolded the bird but it paid no attention.

As I alternately looked at the bird and worked on my notes, it suddenly took off and wheeled away and disappeared. Thus, I had a very brief glance of the bird in flight and all I saw was a broad fanned tail with about 3 light narrow bands against a background of darker color; and a relatively narrow, crooked type wing shape with fanned out finger-like primary tips and much shorter first primary. (I was glad I managed to look for this shorter primary because I had read the night before this was a good mark).

I didn't see where the bird went and didn't chase it. I waited a few minutes to see if it would get up and fly around but didn't see it again.

I estimated that I was initially about 75 feet away and then was able to slowly walk within maybe 60 feet of the sitting bird.

Discussion:

I have seen adult Mississippi Kites in Kansas, but not nearly as well as this bird. The patchy feathering on the breast and back and the banded tail apparently make this a subadult bird; otherwise it looked like an adult.

WEDNESDAY 7  
158th Day • JUNE 7 1989  
TIME RECORD, SERVICES PERFORMED, DIARY

TIME	DESCRIPTION
8:00-9:00	very dark bird puff club, 11's brown's black feathers and eyes yellow
9:00-10:00	legs pinkish red bill dark grey
10:00-11:00	grey
11:00-12:00	
12:00-1:00	Ed. 75 ft Fulgen. Christina scaps.
1:00-2:00	body grey - scattered small white patches above on outer grey bluish back.
2:00-3:00	slim grey hat grey breast lightest Cinnamon
3:00-4:00	dark tail band tail w/ narrow black bar tail.
4:00-5:00	
5:00-6:00	

What species? Mississippi Kite How many? 2Location? Dudgeon Lake area, north of VintonType of habitat? riparian woodland near Cedar River, + by a pond, +When? date(s): June 8, 1989 time: 11:50<sup>AM</sup> to 12:10<sup>PM</sup> close to Dudgeon LakeWho? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Phyllis Harrisothers before or after you: Mark Proescholdt, Steve Dinsmore, Jim Sinclair, Eugene + Eloise Armstrong, Carl Bendorf

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

My husband, Carl, + I saw one kite June 7, but Phyllis Harris + I found two. After a long wait near the pond I saw <sup>through the trees</sup> the gray gliding form of a bird larger than a Rock Dove flying over the pond + apparently landing on the back side of a heavily leafed tree. After searching we found it perched on a dead tree about 15 feet from us, + suddenly saw 2 birds in this tree, <sup>one</sup> partially hidden by leaves. We could see the light gray bodies + heads with darker gray wings, backs + tails, squared-off tails. The underparts were blotchy gray, but on the back + sides were oval white patches. A black, sharply hooked bill + ~~seemingly~~ <sup>seemingly</sup> brown iris of the eyes. Once one fanned its tail showing 3 light thin bands on the brown undertail. The higher perched bird flew then, falcon-shaped with graceful swift circles over the pond calling loud clear "Kee-ee" while the perched bird called in response. Then they were both in the air, flying to a dead tree across the pond, about 100 yards away. There they remained silent + almost motionless until we left. By the coloration of the body, + the bands on the tail (which showed in flight too) we

Similar species and how eliminated: determined these were both sub-adult Black-shouldered Kites would Mississippi Kites  
be much whiter, with greater contrast between wings + body.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Cloudy day - 15 feet away at closest range to 100 yards later.  
Binoculars, Nikon 8x30.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen Mississippi Kites twice before, + quite a few Black-shouldered KitesReferences and persons consulted before writing description: Clark's "Hawks" and other field guides.How long before field notes made? at once this form completed? June 8, 1989

What species? MISSISSIPPI KITE How many? 2 (SUBADULTS)Location? NEAR DUDGEON AREA NORTH OF VINTONType of habitat? RIPARIAN WOODLAND AND PONDWhen? date(s): 8 JUNE 1989 time: 12:30 PM to 12:50 PMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL RR#6 IOWA CITYothers with you: RANDY PINKSTONothers before or after you: MOB

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

TWO BIRDS WERE PERCHED IN A DEAD TREE AT BORDER OF POND 200-50 YARDS AWAY. ① ONE BIRD SPENT MOST OF TIME FACING TOWARD ME AND ② THE OTHER WAS A SIDE VIEW. THE GENERAL SIZE WAS SEEMINGLY SMALLER THAN A CROW BUT LARGER THAN A MERLIN, AND THE TWO BIRDS WERE ABOUT THE SAME SIZE. ON BOTH BIRDS (WHEN VISIBLE) THE TUNGS APPEARED TO BE THE SAME LENGTH AS EACH OTHER.

FEATURES SIMILAR FOR BOTH BIRDS: HEAD WAS EVENLY ROUNDED EXCEPT FLAT ON TOP. COLOR WAS LIGHT GRAY WITH BLACK AROUND AND IN FRONT OF EYE (WHICH WAS RED) BILL WAS DARK AND QUITE SHORT AND HOOKED DOWN. BACK AND UPPER WINGS WERE DARK GRAY AND HAD LARGE WHITE SPOTS WHICH WERE VERY NOTICABLE BUT ALSO BROWN SPOTS WHICH WERE MORE SUBTLE. TAIL AND PRIMARIES WERE DARK BROWN. LEGS+FEET WERE ORANGE.

BIRD ① ONLY: SINCE IT WAS FACING TOWARDS ME MOST OF TIME BREAST WAS A MOTTLED OR SPLOTCHY GRAY. FAINT BARRING COULD BE SEEN ON UNDER-SIDE OF TAIL.

BIRD ② ONLY: SIDE VIEW - BREAST & BELLY GRAY, EXCEPT A LIGHT TANNISH WHITE STREAK JUST UNDER WING. SECONDARIES ALSO SHOWED A LIGHT BAND JUST ABOVE PRIMARIES. THIS BIRD FLEW AND CIRCLED BRIEFLY WHEN A GREAT BLUE HERON CAME OVER. IN FLIGHT, TAIL WAS FANDED, AND HAD PROMINENT BLACK & WHITE BARRING WITH TERMINAL BAND DARK & THE WIDEST BAND. THE WINGS WERE QUITE POINTED IN FLIGHT.

Similar species and how eliminated:

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE - BLACK CONSPICUOUS SHOULDER AND LIGHT TAIL, EYE COLOR AND BREAST DIFFER FROM THESE BIRDS.  
 PEREGRINE FALCON - SHAPE IN FLIGHT SIMILAR, BUT FACE PATTERN, BREAST BARRING, EYE COLOR ALL DIFFER.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

PARTLY CLOUDY - LOOKING N TO NE 200-250 YARDS  
 - BUSHNELL 9X36 BINOCULARS  
 - KOWA TSJ 4 20X-60X ZOOM SCOPE

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

HAVE SEEN IN COLORADO AND ARIZONA

References and persons consulted before writing description:

HAWK FIELD GUIDE AND NATL LEGS

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATE this form completed? 7 HOURS

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

89-19

What species? Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) how many? 2Location? near Vinton, IowaType of habitat? large pond bordered by deciduous woodlandWhen? date(s): 8 June 1989 time: 20 minutes to around 12:30 p.m.Who? your name and address: Randy Pinkston, 308 Ronalds, Iowa City 52245others with you: Jim Fullerothers before or after you: several, known to Jim

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

★ Observed perched in tall dead tree at edge of pond, one bird 12-15 feet above the other, Size of a large Cooper's Hawk. Round-headed, long-winged, short-tailed. Bill tiny, black. Black "mask" around red eye; remainder of head <sup>and neck</sup> light gray. Underparts also light gray <sup>(spotted)</sup> except for some light brownish-gray tones along the upper-posterior sides and flanks. Mantle and upper wings dark slate-gray with 4 or 5 distinct white scapular spots on each side and scattered <sup>(tertials also brownish)</sup> less distinct pale brownish-gray spots. Pointed wingtips extended to tail-tip at rest. Lower bird fanned tail while preening at one point, revealing 3 narrow white bands and 4 dark-brown bands (incl. terminal band.) Wing-tips also dark brownish. Legs/feet orange.

The upper bird took flight when a Great Blue Heron flew over the pond, circled low and landed again. During its flight I noted the long, very pointed wings (dark, grayish below) and tail with 3 bold white bands.

★ Addendum: Both birds were similarly marked and sized although the lower bird was perhaps slightly smaller. I judged them to be sub-adult. (1 year)

Similar species and how eliminated:

White-tailed Kite has pale tail in all ages, also black shoulders. N. Harrier with owl-like facies, lacks red eye and black mask, differs behaviorly, etc. Peregrine Falcon has long, pointed wings but is never light gray over head and underparts.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Partly cloudy/sunny skies at approx. 200 yds.

Zeiss 10 x 40 and Kowa 20-50X scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I just moved to Iowa City from my home region of eastern Texas where I have observed all species above numerous times over past 17-18 years.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson Hawk GuideHow long before field notes made? 7-8 hrs. this form completed? same

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-19

What species? Mississippi Kite How many? 2

Location? 1/2 mi. N. of Vinton, Benton Co. IA.

Type of Habitat? Riverbottom Forest with old channel ponds

When? date(s): 8 June, 1989 time: 2:20 PM to 2:30 PM CD:

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 2354 McClellan Blvd. Davenport IA 52001

Others with you: Brian Blevins

Others before or after you: Steve Dinsmore, Jim Fuller, mob.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Smallish hawk, about the length of a ♀ Sharp-shinned but much longer winged. Seen only in flight, wings narrow. Fairly pointed tail slightly rounded. Wings held fairly flat when soaring. Birds were in subadult plumage, medium grey above except head very pale grey with dark area in front of eyes. From below tail very dark grey with 3 white bars, body medium grey, some brownish on underwing coverts, else wings grey. The two birds not exactly the same size, we suspected they were ♂ + ♀. Flight very effortless and "light."

Similar species; how eliminated:

Peregrine Falcon - much larger, dark areas on head, underwing pattern much different. Flight characteristics much more powerful.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Partly cloudy, sun above obs not behind birds - birds in flight as close as 50 m.  
10X80 Zeiss binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen this species several times in Ill. + Oklahoma + Kansas. In 1988 observed about 300 in migration in Mexico in late April.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Checked Hawks by Clark + Wheeler + Geo. Guide prior to observation.

How long before field notes made? 10 min this form completed? 6 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

Record No. 3

## Documentation - Iowa Bird

4 Ltr Code MIKI

NGS-186 / G-68/ PE-150 / PWpl-17 / AMG(I)-222 / BH-220

First Name	Mississippi			Notes We walked back along power line easement through dense woods to edge of pond, near Vinton.	
Last Name	Kite				
Sci Name	Ictinia mississippiensis				
How many?	2	Date	6/9/89		
City		St/Prov	IA		
Co.	Benton	Nation	USA		
Place Code					
Hab. Code	P		Pond		
St. Life List	Yes	N.A. Life List	Yes		
Flag 1	Yes	Flag 2			

Observer: Diane Porter, 908 East Briggs Ave., Fairfield, IA 52556, (515) 472-7256

Type of Habitat: Extensive mature, dense woods, with a pond well back from highway. I glimpsed two birds fly at tree-top height across the cleared line where a power line runs. I had a fleeting look at one bird swooping low over the pond and up into the trees. I watched one bird fly overhead for about one or two minutes.

Time: Between 4: 35 P.M. and 5:30 P.M. I saw one or two birds several times.

Other observers: Many observers reported the bird before me. Anne Barker had seen it at 9 A.M., just before I came back for a second look on 6/10/89. I spent the day, till 5 P.M. without seeing it again.

Description (The parts in quotes are copied directly from notes made at time of observation and instantly afterwards. Unquoted parts were added from memory 7 weeks later.) "Against the sky, merely an agile, graceful, shifting-angled silhouette." I particularly watched to observe its manner of flying, and "IT NEVER FLAPS, so I cannot describe wingbeat." It flew very actively, changing its direction constantly, like a swift does, but it looked very different, because it was such a big bird, and because it did not flap its wings. It used its long tail and shifted the weight of the body to steer, I thought. "Narrow wings, long, tapered at tips, OUTSIDE DIGIT EXTREMELY SHORT." (This short outer digit was very conspicuous as the bird flew against the sky.) "Long narrow tail, widening at end." Outside edges of tail were slightly convex, giving tail a distinctly flared appearance. "Wings sometimes held in a dramatic crook," quite unlike illustrations in any of my field guides. I could not see any color or pattern against the sky, so I can't say whether immature or adult.

Similar species; how eliminated: Swallow-tailed kite has deeply forked tail, and this didn't. **Peregrine** falcon's tail is broader at base, not wasp-waisted like this one. Narrow, tapered, pointed wings, especially with short outer digit, rule out other raptors.

Previous experience with species and similar ones. My first Mississippi kite. I am familiar with black-shouldered kites from living in Santa Barbara, California.

References consulted before writing description: NGS, Peterson Hawks, Hawks in Flight, Audubon Master Guide studied before going to see the bird. None consulted between viewing bird and writing quoted portions of this description. Audubon MG consulted before typing up this report on 8/1/89.