

Mississippi Kite  
22 May 1994  
Peterson Pits, Story Co., IA  
\*Mark Proescholdt, \*Randy Pinkston  
IBL 64:74; 65:81

Record Number: 94-10  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148 [19 Aug 1994]  
Randy Pinkston, 526 Reno St., Iowa City, IA 52245

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:74  
Records Committee: IBL 65:81

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Sighting was very brief, and details lacking, but overall jizz and description given appears adequate for this species.

A-D, I saw too, briefly -- too briefly to document.

A-D, Although the time of observation was short, details are sufficient for identification. A couple of us even came up with the same (albeit tentative) ID with no details in about a one second sighting!

A-D, Pinkston documentation diagnostically describes this gray falcon-shaped bird.

A-D, Excellent descriptions both observers. Pinkston familiar with species.

What species? Mississippi Kite How many? 1Location? Peterson Pits Co. Area - (Story County)Type of habitat? Gravel pit areas right along the Skunk RiverWhen? date(s): May 22, 1994 time: 8:00 a.m. <sup>very approximately for</sup> ~~to~~ 5-7 secondsWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Randy Pinkston, Dan Dorrance, Mary Kuhlman, Carolyn Fischer, Jan, Walter, Daniel Pinkston, Dorothy Zehr, Sibyl Sand, many others,others before or after you: None

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.

I first got a glimpse through the trees and thought it was a Kite or a falcon. Then we had all open sky to watch it. It had kind of pointed wings at first glimpses. Saw underside only and thought it looked all dark gray. It flew in a very leisurely manner. It circled twice, I believe, in short circles and leisurely flew along the Skunk River northward. It was larger in size than a large ♀ Kestrel, smaller in size than a Peregrine, and probably larger than a Merlin would be. It had a slim body, large long wings, and a squarish-type tail. It portrayed a graceful appearance in its leisurely flight. We all wished to see more of it, but I thought it was a Mississippi Kite from the early stages.

Randy Pinkston, who sees 50 Mississippi Kites in an afternoon in August at his parents' home in Houston, Texas, was with us and said he was 100% sure that this bird was a Mississippi Kite.

Similar species and how eliminated: A Merlin has a fast, deliberate flight. Other falcons already mentioned.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain: :

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

Sunny with sun behind us. The bird was low over the treetops approximately 40'-50' high. The Kite was 40-50 yards at the closest and 120 yards at the furthest  
8 X 30 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen a few Miss. Kites in Iowa and in SW Kansas.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NoneHow long before field notes made? May 23, 1994 this form completed? May 25, 1994  
at noon

Details on adult **Mississippi Kite**, Ictinia mississippiensis

**Date:** May 22, 1994

**Time:** 07:50

**Location:** "Peterson Pits" Mine Reclamation Area, Story County, Iowa

**Other Observers:** Daniel Pinkston, Mark Proescholdt, several others

**Description:**

The bird was initially spotted by Mark Proescholdt. I had a brief (~5-10 second) look at it as it sailed away from us at ~100+ meters. Medium-sized slender raptor with very long pointed wings and long squared tail. Larger than kestrel. Smaller than harrier. Long wings were held straight out from body like planks. Brief view in bright sunlight revealed solid dark slate-gray body, underwings, and tail. I did not see its dorsal surface. Head was very round and pale gray in color, appeared whitish by contrast to rest of the bird.

**Behavior:** Its flight was typically kite-like, that is, leisurely riding updrafts on fixed wings as it sailed northward.

**Conditions:** Clear, calm, warm. Zeiss 10x40 binocular from 100+ meters.

**Similar Species:** Falcons also have pointed wingtips but wings typically appear more sickle-shaped, less plank-like. Falcon not expected to sail so effortlessly on fixed wings for so long. Dark slate-gray plumage and white head seen in good light does not fit with any North American falcon.

**Previous Experience:** I have observed hundreds of Mississippi Kites as migrants and summer residents in eastern Texas since 1977.

--Randy Pinkston  
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