

Mississippi Kite
22 May 1991
e. of Randall, Hamilton Co., IA
*Mark Proescholdt, *Beth Proescholdt
IBL 61:91, 62:71

Record Number: 91-06
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS:

Mark Proescholdt, P.O. Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148
Beth Proescholdt, P.O. Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:91
Records Committee: IBL 62:71

VOTE: 5-A-D, 2-NA

A-D, complete and thorough details.

A-D, Good job eliminating other species despite briefness of sighting.

A-D, Jist, the all gray underneath appearance, and a flared squared off tail fits Mississippi Kite.

A-D, Same comments as 91-05.

NA, Shape and behavior fit. No details of plumage seen except for possible light banding on tail. Bird seen for only 10 seconds. From the evidence, I would judge this one as "probable".

NA. The flight pattern described is very interesting but more needs to be seen and described than a flight pattern on a bird that was a gray or grayish color underneath. Nothing diagnostic was described to make this beyond reasonable doubt a Mississippi Kite.

A-D, I believe this is a Mississippi Kite fly-by.

REVOTE: 3 A-D, 4 NA

NA, I am reluctantly changing my vote to NA on both Kites (Record 91-06 and 91-05). The descriptions of both birds were very similar, as were the viewing conditions. Both were very probably Mississippi Kites. However in the best interest of the scientific record, and the need for undisputed information about the apparent increase in vagrancy and expansion in range, we should probably take the conservative approach.

NA, The shape and jist make this a probable kite sighting. However, the extremely short viewing time caused a lack of detailed field marks making a certain ID call to risky.

NA, This should be classified as one that got away. I have been fooled by nighthawks at this time of day.

NA. I think we need to be very careful about accepting short time sightings on marginally described birds such as this. Nothing in the documentation conclusively describes this as a Mississippi Kite.

A-D, I believe this is a Mississippi Kite.

What species? Mississippi Kite How many? 1Location? Hamilton County just east of RandallType of habitat? along Skunk River Valley - wooded river - open area near bridgeWhen? date(s): May 22, 1991 time: 7:35pm ~~to~~ very approximately for 7-10 secondsWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdtothers 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.

We were stopped along the road by the Skunk River bridge listening for bird songs when I spotted this raptor flying over the river and coming closer to us. This bird had very long, narrow pointed wings and was flapping somewhat like a nighthawk or a harrier with a very slow fluid motion in its wingbeats. It had a rolling up and down motion with its wing flaps. It was 30-40 feet above the ground as it was flying over the river.

I thought this bird was a falcon at first glimpses but then thought it must be a Kite. It was definitely grayish underneath - about all grayish in my brief looks at it. It seemed $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 times the size of a Nighthawk and had no white markings in the wings. My whole impression of the bird was that it was a dark, grayish bird. I saw no contrasting colors on wings, head, tail, or body in my brief looks at the bird. The underneath side I saw the best and that appeared all grayish. The bird had a squared-off tail that seemed flared out at the end. tail

(Continued on Back)

Similar species and how eliminated:

(See on Back)

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions; give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Light was behind us - we were facing east. Mostly cloudy. Sunset was at 8:33 p.m. that day. 110 yards away when first seen to its closest at 40 yards away at the bridge where we were parked - (estimated). 8x30 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen in Kansas and in Vinton, Iowa, area. Familiar with all the similar species.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

National Geographic's Birds of North America.

How long before field notes made? Right away this form completed? May 29, 1991

I don't recall that it glided any but it may have. Mom thought it did, and it probably did for us to get good looks at the body shape, tail, and underneath. All I recall was that it was flapping in a slow, purposeful manner and going down the river valley.

After it disappeared from view we took off and drove along a blacktop road going south paralleling the river. After about a mile we thought we had lost it, but then we saw it again. It was just above the tree-tops and over the river valley flapping in its purposeful flight. We saw it for 1-2 seconds and decided to race it to the river bridge about $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile downstream. We got to the bridge and jumped out with anticipation of getting a good look at it and never saw it again. I don't know if it roosted in the trees before the bridge or if it flew by and we missed it. Notes were made just after that and before looking at books.

Similar Species

- Harrier — tail was not right and long enough for harrier and bird was not right color underneath.
- Nighthawk — Our bird was much bigger than Nighthawk and had no white patches in its wings.
- Turkey Vulture or Eagle — Our bird was much smaller and had long, narrow pointed wings.
- Accipiters — Body shape was wrong and did not have extra long tail — look like accipiters have.
- Osprey — Wrong body shape for osprey and no white markings on our bird.
- Buteos — Wrong body shape again even for Swainson's Hawk which can appear to have pointed wings when seen overhead. Buteos have much broader wings and should show some white contrasting colors underneath.
- Falcons — Our bird was too big for a Kestrel or Merlin. I don't think Merlins ever have leisurely, slow flapping flight. This bird didn't fly right for a Peregrine and the body proportions were not right for a Peregrine. I've seen Peregrines fly in a slow, leisurely manner and this did not seem to suggest a Peregrine at all. A Peregrine or Prairie Falcon should show some light-colored areas underneath. Also, a Peregrine's tail tapers down to a rounded end and is not squared off and flared at the end.
- Black-Shouldered Kite — Would show much white in tail and underneath body. Our bird was too dark underneath for a Black-Shouldered Kite.

What species? Mississippi Kite How many? 1Location? South Hamilton County, east of RandallType of habitat? bridge over Skunk River with riverbottom woodlandsWhen? date(s): May 22, 1991 time: 7:40 PM to 10 seconds laterWho? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Mark Proescholdt

others before or after you: _____

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.

Mark & I were at the bridge over the Skunk River headed east that evening. "Look at this bird," said Mark as a large slim bird came flying from the north. Falcon shaped - almost -, or was it a Harrier, or a giant Nighthawk shape? It glided momentarily for us to see the exact shape of the slim body; the long, narrow, pointed wings; long square-tipped tail spreading a little at the tip of the tail, with possibly light banding on the tail's underside. The only color I saw was gray - (it was late evening). After the slight glide it resumed its extraordinary flying pattern of deep, almost "looping" rolling wing beats & was immediately behind the trees. We saw it at most for 10 seconds. We hurried around the corner to take the road south paralleling the river hoping for another look. About a mile or two on we saw it again just above the treetops, really noticeable by its unusual flight & then it was behind trees again. Speeding to the next bridge to see it as it passed, we waited & waited & didn't see it again.

over

Similar species and how eliminated:

see on backDid any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

cloudy, but good light from behind us as we saw the bird. It flew just above tree level a few yards in front of us. Binocs: 8x30 Nikons

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen a few Mississippi Kites, a few more Black-shouldered Kites, several Peregrines, many Harriers.
 References and persons consulted before writing description: looked at picture in National Geographic but didn't read it. Mark & I talked about it of course.
 How long before field notes made? at once this form completed? May 27, 1991

What species? Mississippi Kite How many? 1Location? Hamilton County just east of RandallType of habitat? along Skunk River Valley - wooded river - open area near bridgeWhen? date(s): May 22, 1991 time: 7:35pm ~~to~~ very approximately for 7-10 secondsWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Lisco, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdtothers before or after you: None

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(Continued on Back)

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