

Documentation  
First State Record  
Mississippi kite  
Tom Kemp

On May 16, 1982, Larry Peavler, Pete Montion, Sue Owens, Peggy Graham, Jon Seymour, Lud Deppisch, Rod Guest and I observed a sub-adult Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) in the Oak Openings, western Lucas County, Ohio. We were standing on the edge of Girdham Road, about half way between Sager and Monclova Roads. The habitat is mixed deciduous woodland, sand dune - dry praires and pine plantation. Suddenly about 10:00 am the bird was seen soaring directly overhead and then slightly to the west of us. Fortunately the sun was in the east with clear skies so the lighting could not have been better. It was approximately 100 feet overhead and soaring in circles. It gradually gained altitude getting higher and higher as it soared until it set it's wings and soared out of view. The bird was in sight for about six minutes (I did not observe it for the entire time as I was running to get a scope but others in the group studied it for the full period of view).

The soaring bird reminded me exactly of a soaring falcon except that the tail was longer and narrower, especially at the base. The wings in soaring position were like an extremely narrow-winged Buteo. When the bird set its wings to glide out of sight, the long, narrow, crooked and pointed nature of the wings was apparent. I only glimpsed the bird as it disappeared with set wings but others studied it.

The head, throat and upper chest were white to off-white in color. There appeared to be some dark feathering about the eye. The lower chest and belly down to the under tail coverts were heavily streaked with dark brown or black.

The wings exhibited a definite two-tone effect, the wing linings lighter than the darker flight feathers. The tail was long and narrow and tapered from the end to the base so the base of the tail was decidedly more narrow than the tail as a whole. The ground color of the tail was black but it was banded with narrow white bands interspersed with narrow white bands.

Fortunately, I have seen hundreds of Mississippi kites migrating in Texas and also seen this bird in Florida. But even more fortuitous was the quick camera work of Jon Seymour, capturing the soaring bird with his Pentax SLR, 350 mm soligor lens and 400 ASA film and thereby providing photographic documentation for this state record. A great day.

Editor note: The account above was excerpted from the documentations submitted (with the photograph) by Tom Kemp and Larry Peavler to the Ohio Records Committee and subsequently accepted by them as the first and to date only documented record of this species in Ohio.