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A MISSISSIPPI KITE IN HALL COUNTY, NEBRASKA

The Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) is considered extremely rare in Nebraska, with only 8 spring records and 2 fall records (Johnsgard, P.A., 1980, A revised list of the birds of Nebraska and adjacent Plains States, Occasional papers of the N.O.U., No. 6, Lincoln, Nebraska, 114 pp.). On 10 July 1983, at 12:30 CDT, we sighted an adult Mississippi Kite circling above a flooded native hay meadow on Shoemaker Island, Hall Co. (Sec. 1, T9N R11W). The bird was identified by its frosted head and secondaries, pearly gray back and underside, and black retrices. It is believed this Kite was attracted to the area because of the recent flooding of the Platte River. This represents the first record in Hall Co., and the first summer record in Nebraska.

— Gary R. Lingle and Kari L. Haugh, *The Platte River Whooping Crane Trust*,
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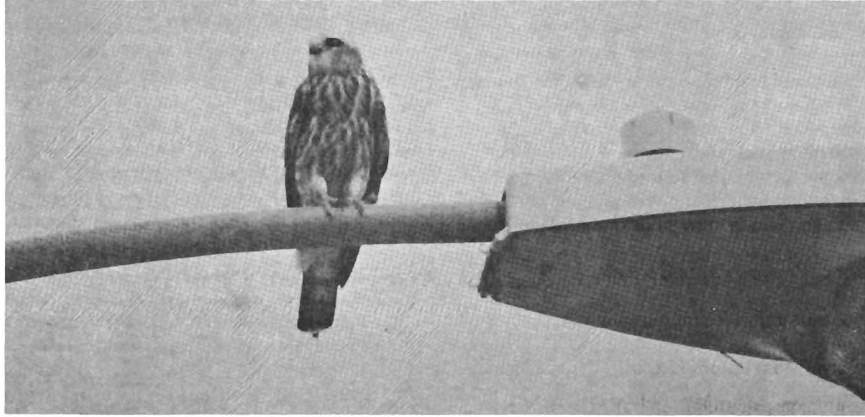
MISSISSIPPI KITES. On 3 September 1983 Norris Alfred and I observed four Mississippi Kites. Three were in the east end of Aurora, near the golf course. There were all immatures, and they had been seen and identified by the William Whitneys of Aurora, Gary Lingle of Grand Island, and others, and reported to Norris. The wind was strong out of the south the day we were there and the birds would circle to the north of us and then glide back over us very low into the wind, sometimes hardly moving. This afforded us a very good opportunity to observe them at close range for identification markings. One bird had something in one talon and fed on it occasionally, but we couldn't tell what it was. After watching the birds for quite some time we drove back to Polk, and as we were getting out of the car I noticed a bird soaring over the east end of town that resembled the Kites we had just seen. After watching it for a while we could see that it also was an immature Mississippi Kite. Since we had never seen one in this area before we were very surprised to find four in one day, at two separate locations. The Kites in Aurora had been there for over a week; I don't know how long the one had been at Polk.

— Lee Morris, Rte. 1, Box 14, Benedict, Nebraska 68316

About 10:45 AM on 4 September 1983 we saw an immature Mississippi Kite sitting on a power line on the north side of Gifford Road, at the intersection with Child's Road. For approximately 15 minutes we observed it from a distance of 50-100 feet, while it was sitting or hunting insects.

It was about the size of a Cooper's Hawk. It had pearl-gray feathers on the face and neck, except for a wide white eyebrow and white in the middle of the throat and around the beak. It had a yellow cere, and a dark, hooked beak. There was heavy brown streaking on the breast and belly. Undertail coverts were buffy. It had white feathering on the legs. Feet were flesh colored. The top of the wing was slate-gray and the primaries were black. The tail had about 1½ inch dark terminal band. When the bird was sitting the wings extended slightly beyond the tip of the tail.

In flight the tail showed brown banding underneath, separated by narrow white bands. The wing showed light brown linings, contrasted with dark brown in secondaries and primaries. The shape of the wings in flight was long and pointed, falcon-like. The flight was very graceful.



The Kite seemed unconcerned by human activity. Several cars and trucks passed under the light pole on which it was sitting. It then flew across the road to catch a large insect in the air, and then landed on another light pole, about 200 feet north of the intersection. It ate the insect, which appeared to be a cicada, while sitting on the pole and holding it in its talons.

Fortunately we were only a few blocks away from Fontenelle Forest Nature Center, and were able to get Bob Fluchel to come and photograph the bird. He arrived at this time and began taking photographs. After a few minutes the bird circled overhead a couple of times and headed north until it was out of sight.

— *Babs and Loren Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005*