



# BirdWalk Newsletter 8.7.16

Conducted by Perry Nugent

Written by Jayne J Matney

Above Photo by Arthur Ellis

If I were to describe a bird that is both graceful and an acrobat in the air, noted for pointed-tipped wings, and has shadow-like grey and white feathers and piercing eyes, could you guess yet what I am going to discuss in this week's newsletter? If you guessed the Mississippi Kite, you are right! These excellent fliers and soarers eat large insects such as grasshoppers, cicadas, beetles, and moths- usually those that may damage gardens or farmer's crops. Therefore, they are advantageous to have around in most areas. They have small hooked bills and talons that are useful for also eating frogs, bats, small rodents, small birds, and turtles. They have adjusted quite well to moving into new areas and ecosystems. They have recently been noted for moving further west and even adjusting to living in populated areas with green space. For example, they are being seen in cities and towns that have green spaces such as parks and golf courses where trees may border. The downside may be the fact that they are

fierce when it comes to defending their nests. If one has set up somewhere close to your house, work place, favorite park or golf course, you may have this bird swooping down at your head because you will be viewed as the intruder! Hats or other protective wear would be advised. Mississippi Kite are social birds. During migration, they travel together and during nesting, they choose to nest in colonies. As a matter-of-fact, from the very first when they hatch and are around their siblings, they remain rather friendly with each other and work together to fortify their nest and clean each other. There are only 1-2 eggs in each nest. Both parents help incubate and raise babies for about 8 weeks.

Mississippi Kite  
*Ictinia mississippiensis*



Right: Kite on nest keeping a close eye on photographer



Above and below: Mississippi Kite in the conifers By Perry Nugent





Young kite overlooking the landscape

Photo by Larry Maras

This past week there was a tiny back paddle in the heat wave, but not much. The birds have been dealing with this heat as we have by staying less active and reclusive. Hopefully, there will be only a few more weeks of this intense heat and we will start feeling symptoms of fall coming our way. Mississippi Kites were only flyovers today unlike most Sundays. Red-shouldered Hawks were heard in two locations: one between the observation tower and the house and the other off the exit road between the maintenance area and the slave cabin row. 40 of our year-round Common Moorhens were seen, while a lone American Coot decided to stick around and not migrate away this year. The plantation is thrilled to report approximately 125 Wood Ducks on the property this year at this time including some late brooding. Successful breeding this year has our numbers up. Speaking of numbers being up, 5 Yellow-billed Cuckoos were here this Sunday as well and 3 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 15 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 2 Downys, and 3 Pileated Woodpecker which included at least one young one in a nest. Perry

related that the 4 Great-crested Flycatchers were especially pretty this week! Plumage was very vibrant and activity was high as they flew from limb to limb in the trees. The White-eyed Vireo were seen periodically during the walk- one at the cross dike and 2 in the Audubon Swamp for example. A Highlight was seeing a fast moving Louisiana Waterthrush behind Ravenswood Pond. 2 American Redstart were also viewed. Our regulars did not disappoint. Boat-tailed Grackle, Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Cardinal, American and Fish Crows, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Blue Jay, Turkey Vulture, Laughing Gull, Anhinga, Least Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Green Heron, and White Ibis made the walking trip total 35 species. Outside of the walk, employees have reported seeing Prothonotary Warblers and a Barred Owl this week.



Photos by Jo Frkovich