

limited almost entirely to southern Texas and from here ranges southward along the tropical coasts of Mexico and central America. There are scattered nesting records in other parts of Texas and in Arizona (Southwestern Nat. 15:394-395) and Kansas (Am. Birds 34:908). Two nesting records from the Miami, Florida, area (Am. Birds 23:652) may represent escapes from a nearby zoo. Individuals from the northern portion of their range normally over-winter south of the United States/Mexican border. Because this duck is not typically a long-distance wanderer, it should be suspected that a February North Carolina record is that of an escaped bird. Nevertheless, the condition of the plumage and feet give no indication of recent captivity. This record, the first for North Carolina and one of the few from east of the Mississippi River, will qualify the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck as a Provisional II species on the state bird list. Most other waterfowl records of birds of possibly captive origin have received the same status (Chat 443:59-61).

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Status of the Mississippi Kite in North Carolina

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The presence of Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) during the breeding season in North Carolina was first reported in June 1972 from the Occoneechee Neck area of Northampton County (Chat 36:112). Since that time, a number of sightings during the period of May through October have been reported from the coastal plain and piedmont provinces of the state. This field note is intended to clarify the present status of the species in North Carolina.

Mississippi Kites are presently undergoing a substantial range expansion and population increase throughout their range in the southern United States (Am. Birds, 33:119-129) and are apparently expanding their range northeastward through eastern North Carolina. Prior to 1972 there were only three records for the state: one killed in Cherokee County on 26 May 1893, another shot in that area soon afterward, and one at Southern Pines on 20 October 1949 (Birds of North Carolina, 1959). Since 1972 a number of verified sightings have been reported from the state. These are summarized in Figure 1 and below.

1. One at Occoneechee Neck, Northampton County, on 15 June 1972 (Chat 36:112).
2. One at Occoneechee Neck on 6-12 May 1973 (Chat 37:105-106).
3. One adult at Cutawhiskie Creek, SW Hertford County, on 4 July 1973 (Chat 37:105-106).
4. One along the Pee Dee River, SE Anson County, on 12 July 1975 (Chat 40:18).
5. Twenty-three counted along the Pee Dee River in SE Anson County and adjacent Chesterfield County, S.C., on 3 August 1975 (Chat 40:47).
6. One adult along the Eno River, Durham County, on 24 April 1976 (Chat 40:87).
7. One immature at Occoneechee Neck on 8 May 1976 (Chat 40:87).
8. Twenty-three (including two immatures) at Buzzard Neck, SE Halifax County, on 30 May 1976 (Am. Birds 30:827).
9. One at Cedar Mountain, Transylvania County, on 6 June 1976 (Chat 41:14).
10. Five adults at Buzzard Neck on 6 June 1977 and three adults there on 26 June 1977 (Chat 42:17).
11. Two immatures at Nash Farms in Franklin County on 14 September 1978 (Chat 43:38).

12. Twenty-nine adults at Buzzard Neck on 2 June 1979 and one immature there with several adults on 4 July 1979 (Am. Birds 33:854).
13. Two adults along the Pee Dee River, SE Anson County, on 16 August 1979 (Chat 44:47).
14. One immature at Jordan Reservoir, Chatham County, on 20 September 1979 (Chat 44:47).
15. Two immatures at Oak Island, Brunswick County, on 18 October 1979 (Chat 44:47).

In addition to the above records there are several unpublished sightings of adults from the Oconeechee Neck and Buzzard Neck sections of the Roanoke River flood plain. These records include single birds at Oconeechee Neck and flocks of 5 to 20 individuals at Buzzard Neck, all dated May through July 1976-1980.

A review of the above published records indicates there are only three sites where kites have been noted on a regular basis during the breeding season (May-July). The other records likely represent postbreeding dispersants from populations in South Carolina.

Two of these sites, Oconeechee Neck and Buzzard Neck, are located within 25 air miles of each other on the flood plain of the Roanoke River in the northern coastal plain. Both sites are similar in habitat, containing a mosaic pattern of large, low-lying agricultural fields with numerous cypress-gum swamp sloughs and alluvial bottomland forest. The kites are restricted to the low flood plain, feeding over both the forested zones and the open farmland.

Immature kites have been observed at both sites in May and July. One immature seen at Buzzard Neck on 4 July 1979 had a very ragged appearance with several primaries missing from each wing. It was seen in company with several adults feeding over a large beaver pond. Its behavior also suggested a young bird recently off the nest. The flight was awkward and clumsy with much flapping in contrast to the smooth, effortless gliding of the adults. This record, coupled with the regularity of occurrence at this location, *suggests* the possibility of breeding although positive confirmation (nest or flightless young) is still lacking for the state.

The third site is along the Pee Dee River in extreme southeastern Anson County near the South Carolina state line and situated on the extreme eastern edge of the

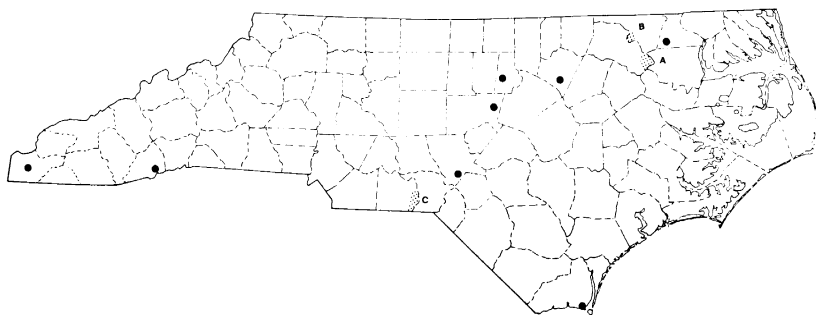


Fig. 1. The map shows all known occurrences of the Mississippi Kite in North Carolina. Dots represent scattered sightings. Stippled areas are sites where the species has been found regularly since 1972 and where breeding is suspected: Buzzard Neck, Halifax County (A); Oconeechee Neck, Northampton County (B); and Pee Dee River, Anson County (C). (Map by Steven P. Platania.)

piedmont province. There are published reports of up to 23 individuals from this area and adjacent Chesterfield County, S.C. The habitat at this site is strikingly different from the Roanoke River sites. The flat floodplain levee is restricted to a very narrow zone along the river channel and is bordered on both sides by steeply rising upland slopes. Almost all of the land bordering the river is forested except for clearcuts, and there is little open farmland.

Floodplain habitat similar to that of the Roanoke River sites does exist along the Pee Dee River downstream in South Carolina where the river enters the relatively flat coastal plain. I believe that the Anson County kites are nesting in South Carolina and using the Anson County site primarily for feeding purposes.

One habitat feature present at all three sites is extensive open areas of beaver ponds ranging in size from several acres to 100 acres. These ponds provide optimum breeding conditions for numerous species of dragonflies, mayflies, and other large flying insects and may provide important feeding habitat for the kites. I have noted flocks of kites feeding over beaver ponds in the Buzzard Neck area.

Parker and Ogden (*Am. Birds* 33:119-129) have documented the Mississippi Kite expansion and population increase throughout the southern United States. The question arises as to how far north the species' historic breeding range extended. Evidence supports a recent range expansion and not a reoccupation of former range, at least for the Roanoke River population. The species, by virtue of its gregariousness and preference for open areas, is highly visible and not easily overlooked, even by farmers and others who have no real interest in birds. Personal communication with several farmers in the Buzzard Neck area revealed that they had noticed the kites at the site since the late 1960s or early 1970s. They did not recall having seen any earlier than that, even though the memories of some went back to the 1920s and 1930s. I believe that these birds represent a recent range expansion as a result of the "spillover effect" from population increases further south in South Carolina and Georgia.

I predict that breeding evidence will soon be confirmed in North Carolina and that additional populations will be discovered in areas of suitable habitat in the coastal plain. Potential habitat exists in the flood plains along the major brown-water rivers, i.e., the Cape Fear, Neuse, and Tar systems. Sections that contain the best habitat include the Cape Fear from Fayetteville downstream to Elizabethtown, the Neuse from Clayton downstream to Kinston, and the Tar from Rocky Mount downstream to Greenville.

Second Sight Record of Say's Phoebe in South Carolina

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Ruth Ittner and I spent the afternoon of 30 September 1979 watching birds on Bulls Island in Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, Charleston County, S.C. After an hour we met the assistant refuge manager, Dick Munoz, and proceeded by vehicle to the refuge boat basin on the west side of the island. Upon our arrival at 1430 EDT, I noticed a bird perched on the corner of the roof covering the boat basin. The dark-colored bird exhibited an upright flycatcher posture and wagged its tail. When we left the vehicle, the bird flew a short distance and perched approximately 5 m above the ground in the top of a small tree. While the bird was flying, we noted the rusty abdomen and flycatcher-like flight. With 7 x 35 binoculars, we viewed the stationary bird for approximately 4 minutes from a distance of 10 m. We saw the dark brown-gray head, gray back, and dull black tail. The wings were also dull black with gray edging on the secondaries and coverts. The throat and breast were light gray. After this period of observation, the bird flew toward and past us. It then perched for approximately 2 minutes on an I-beam supporting the roof of the boat basin. Again we saw the characteristics previously mentioned. The bird was last seen flying southeast over the salt marsh toward the interior of the island.