

## THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

Eric G. Bolen and Dan Flores. 1993. University of Texas Press, Austin. Hardback. 115 pp. With appendices. Price not listed

Eric Bolen, Dean of the Graduate School at UNC-Wilmington, and Dan Flores, Hammond Professor of Western History at the University of Montana, have teamed up to write a marvelous little monograph on what I consider to be one of the most lovely of the birds of prey, the Mississippi Kite. Lest the word "monograph" scare you off, I assure you that this is not a weighty tome filled with scientific jargon, but instead a simple, but accurate presentation of most of what is known (and not known) about this attractive little raptor.

The book consists of five chapters dealing directly with the Mississippi Kite and one that focuses on conservation and management. There are three appendixes that cover common and scientific names of other organisms mentioned in the text, the dimorphism index and a history of sightings of Mississippi Kites in the last decade. There is also an intelligent list of suggested references for additional reading.

The book describes the discovery of the species (which turns out to have its own interesting scientific wrinkles) and the spread of the species range as a response to human alteration of habitats over the years. Information on its breeding range, migration, breeding, young raising, and food habits are presented in a way that most people interested in birds will find easily readable. The only factual error that I encountered is a statement on page twelve that suggests that the falcons are usually included within the family Accipitridae with the kites, hawks and eagles; whereas most ornithologists place the falcons in a separate family, Falconidae.

I believe most readers will find the chapter on conservation and management particularly informative. While it is less focused on Mississippi Kites than the earlier chapters are, it does deal with the often misguided interactions between humans and birds of prey in a most insightful way and will help to provide a perspective within which to view the nature of the world inhabited by both Mississippi Kites and ourselves. — H. T. Hendrickson