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FIRST NESTING RECORDS FOR MISSISSIPPI KITE IN NEBRASKA
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Mississippi Kites are regular visitors to Nebraska. Prior to 1974, there were four reports for the state (NBR 33:49. 1965), but it has occurred almost annually since then. Almost all reports are from the North Platte and Missouri River valleys, with concentrations of sightings at Fontenelle Forest in Sarpy County, near Aurora in Polk County, and, most recently, in Ogallala, Keith County. Of 39 dated reports, 12 were in May and 13 in September, suggesting spring overshoot migrants and fall dispersal. The first summer report was an adult at Shoemaker Island, Hall County on 10 July, 1983 (NBR 51:90). Several other reports are suggestive of breeding. A single bird was seen in Ogallala in 1992, and a territorial male was observed there in 1993 (Richard C. Rosché, pers. comm.).

On 6 August, 1994, we found at least 11 Mississippi Kites soaring over the north edge of Ogallala, especially in the vicinity of the hospital. The birds appeared to be foraging and captured several large insects, including a butterfly and a large locust. Our highest count was eight adults and three subadults. The large number of birds suggested that they were breeding nearby, and we watched individual birds in the hope that they might lead us to a nest. After less than 15 minutes of observations, a lone adult suddenly dropped from an elevation of several hundred feet and disappeared into a group of large trees in a nearby residential section of the town. We drove to the area and, at 3:50 p.m. MDT (Mountain Daylight Time), found a nest containing two nearly full-grown young. The nest was located 35-40 feet above ground in the crotch of a large American elm. It consisted of a loose platform of small twigs, similar in size and shape to that of an American Crow (pers. obs.). The nest was located in a vacant lot east of the residence at 515 East 5th

Street. the residents of that house told us that the kites had been nesting in the same tree for the past several years. We remained near the nest for about 30 minutes. The young were fed large locusts by an adult every 2-3 minutes. One of the young remained in the nest while the other perched on a large limb several feet from the nest. Both birds appeared capable of flight, judging from their large size and well-developed primaries, but neither bird was observed in flight.

At approximately 4:30 p.m. MDT, we located a second kite nest just a few blocks west of the first nest and just west of St. Lukes Park, or just southwest of the intersection of East 4th St. and East B St. The nest was also in an American elm, about 40 feet above ground, and was similar in appearance to the first nest. It contained an unknown number of small, young birds, which were being fed by two adults.

On 6 August, 1995, we returned to Ogallala and observed at least nine adult kites soaring in the vicinity of the hospital and in the Boot Hill area. As in 1994, most of the birds appeared to be capturing large locusts, but we watched one adult kite chase and eventually capture a Cliff Swallow, apparently a rare phenomenon. Bent (1937) noted that, "Birds apparently are never molested, and small birds show no fear of it." However, Mississippi Kites do on occasion attack Chimney Swifts and Cliff Swallows (Palmer 1988). At approximately 9:40 a.m. MDT, we located a nest about 40 feet above ground in a large, dying elm tree behind the house at 1122 E. B St. The nest contained one large, young bird.

These are the first documented nesting records for Mississippi Kites in Nebraska, and apparently the northernmost for the U.S. The species has bred as close as Ellis County, Kansas (Thompson and Ely 1989), and is consolidating its range and increasing in numbers in the Great Plains, mainly in response to extensive shelterbelt plantings (Palmer 1988).

LITERATURE CITED

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