

Mississippi kite *Ictinia mississippiensis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Accipitriformes

Family: Accipitridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The Mississippi kite is 14 to 14 and one-half inches long (bill tip to tail tip in preserved specimen). It has pointed wings. Its feathers are mainly gray with lighter gray feathers on the head and underside. Its tail and the outer edges of the wings have black feathers. There is a white patch of feathers on the rear edge of the upperwing. Immature birds of this species do not have the white wing patch and have faint white bands on the tail. The juvenile Mississippi kite is browner than the adult with red-brown streaks on its belly feathers.

BEHAVIORS

This soaring bird nests in woodlands along rivers, in cities and in tree groves. It eats large insects, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals. It is a summer resident of southern and west central Illinois. The Mississippi kite overwinters in South America.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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