

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE IN TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY

James P. Key

Department of Biological Sciences
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762

On 1 February 1990, at approximately 4:00 p.m., I was traveling along Mississippi highway 8. About five miles west of the Grenada/Tallahatchie county line I spotted an adult Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) flying from the north and approaching the highway. At first I thought the bird was a gull, then as I got closer it appeared more like a falcon or kite of some type. As I slowed down to better observe the bird, it flew to within 30 m, just above and in front of the vehicle. It then began cruising with an occasional hover above a cut bean field on the south side of the highway. The bird seemed similar in size to a Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), a species with which I am familiar. It was snow white underneath with the exception of dark gray to black wings from the wrist area outward. I never saw the back of the bird clearly. I travelled the same stretch of highway several times in the following weeks, but did not see the kite again.

The Black-shoulded Kite was first found in Mississippi in 1982 in Hancock County and it was later found nesting in that area (Toups et al., 1985, Am. Birds 39:865-867). Jerome Jackson (pers. comm.) indicates that from one to three pairs have nested in Hancock County in recent years. This normally western species has also been found recently in coastal Alabama and in several Louisiana parishes. To my knowledge this is the most northern record for Mississippi. Several days of stormy weather moving through the area prior to this sighting may have influenced the bird's movements.