

Continued nesting of Mississippi Kite in Winnebago County

by Dan Williams

In 2008, a pair of Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) successfully nested and fledged a chick in Rockford (Williams 2009). In 2009, Mississippi Kites again returned to the neighborhood of the C. Henry Bloom School in Rockford, Winnebago County, and a pair nested successfully, again fledging one chick. Interestingly, two other kites were occasionally seen in the area, although only one nest was found. Here is a report regarding the 2009 nest.

On 17 May 2009, neighbors in the Bloom School area of Rockford saw and reported Mississippi Kites flying around their homes. Larry Balch saw up to four kites several times during the breeding season. The four included two adult males, an adult female, and a subadult female. At first, the birds were concentrated around Bloom School. Although the favorite perch tree from 2008 had fallen over in a storm in the late fall of 2008, the kites were frequently seen perched in another tree with dead limbs that was immediately adjacent to last year's perch tree.

By 4 July, a female was fairly regularly seen in the new perch tree, and two to four kites were seen over the park adjacent to the school, but we were unable to locate a nest in the area. On the morning of 5 July, we discovered many sticks from "bottle rockets" that had apparently been fired in, and from, the school parking lot overnight on 4 July. After that, no kites were seen for three days until I found a male bathing in a puddle in the school parking lot on 8 July.

For all of the remainder of July and most of August, various observers saw at least two adult kites (a

male and a female) regularly in the Bloom School neighborhood, but, despite the frequent sightings, we were never able to close in on a nest site. Finally, on 28 August, Larry Balch heard a bird calling repeatedly from a tree for 15 minutes and, on 29 August, Larry and I were finally able to find a juvenile (the noisy caller) and the nest. We kept the kite family under observation for the next few weeks, during which time the juvenile was increasingly adept at flight. We also received periodic reports from a number of folks who came to look for kites and, seeing them, let us know what they saw, and where. We are very grateful to have received their reports. The kites were last reported on 16 September by John Bergstrom.

In 2008, an adult was last seen on 21 September and the juvenile on September 29. Assuming that this is the same adult pair, they succeeded in nesting and departing a week earlier, apparently with the juvenile in their company.

At the beginning of the spring, we asked that anyone seeing kites around Bloom School please refrain from posting on a listserv to protect the likely nest and to minimize disturbance to the birds and neighbors. We also suspected that the kites might nest in a different part of the neighborhood (they did) and, because this is a heavily residential area around a school, we didn't want to alarm the school authorities (they did call the police and report the license number of a car in the school parking lot in May--it was a birder) and the neighbors. We very much appreciate the coop-



A Mississippi Kite adult snatches a monarch near its nest in Winnebago County. 4 September 2009.

Photo by Vic Berardi.

eration of all of you who came to view the kites but refrained from posting. Since we were unable to locate the nest until the chick was fledged and very vocal, your restraint undoubtedly served to maintain tranquility in the neighborhood. When the nest was finally