

# FOWL PLAY ON CAMPUS



Running late for her news writing class, Jessica Napper, a senior agricultural communications major at Texas Tech, pulled into the Murdough dormitory parking lot. Grabbing her things, she took off toward the media and communications building not knowing what was waiting for her. Hovering overhead, a bird flew a mere 30 feet above her, waiting for her to cross into his personal space.

As Napper quickly walked across the grass at Murdough, the Mississippi Kite noticed that she had come too close to its nest. The Kite dived straight at Napper and brushed its claws across the back of her head, leaving her confused as to what just happened.

“It came down and scratched the back of my head and I was like what just happened,” Napper said. “Then it wouldn’t leave me alone, so I just started to run away from it.”

Napper said her experience with the Mississippi Kite left her in tears. After the Kite began swooping at Napper’s head, it didn’t stop harassing her, but instead got more aggressive causing Napper to run back to her vehicle and escape the bird inside her car. Flustered and scared, Napper broke into tears, not knowing what to do.

Becoming somewhat of an infamous bird in Lubbock with the start of each new summer session of college, the bird known as the Mississippi Kite has taken a bad rap for past mishaps. Whether it’s on the Texas Tech campus during summer classes or at a peaceful golf course on a sunny day, the Mississippi Kite seems to be an overly aggressive bird that attacks humans. If only the dive bombing feathered fiend could talk, perhaps some light might be shed on this fowl subject.

Mississippi Kites are generally found along the southeast coast of the United States during breeding season. When the Texas Panhandle became inhabited by people, particularly Lubbock, trees began to grow, enticing the Mississippi Kite to begin nesting in these populated areas during the summer.

The Kites usually appear at the beginning of May and leave when fall begins.

The problem Mississippi Kites are causing on the Texas Tech campus and within the city of Lubbock is due to their protective instincts, which have given them a bad name. Numerous incidents have been shared about Kites “dive-bombing” students on campus or even hitting

*“The hawk basically hit her full chested, hard enough to make her dizzy.”*

someone trying to tee-off on a golf course. There’s a rational explanation for the attacks according to Clint Boal, professor of wildlife ecology in the Department of Natural Research Management at Texas Tech.

Boal began studying Mississippi Kites in 2000. Boal said the main reason Kites “dive-bomb” humans are because people invade the Kites’ privacy. Students on the Texas Tech campus who take shortcuts across the grass and leave the sidewalk are often pass the trees that hold nests of Mississippi Kites.

The Kites have a natural reaction to protect their eggs and will swoop by humans to warn them that they have crossed into their territory. The Kites are merely being protective and not aggressive.

Boal explains the Mississippi Kite’s aggression with an analogy of how a 50-year-old person living in a neighborhood with children running around in it might react. “Say the children are always running down the sidewalk and never bother that 50-year-old. Then one day they run across this person’s front yard and that kind of

# The Mississippi Kite



**Also known as the Milan Du Mississippi, the Mississippi Kite will grow anywhere between 13.4 and 14.6 inches and will only weigh 214 to 388 grams (7.5 to 13.7 ounces).**



**Mississippi Kites are known to nest in riverine forests, open woodlands and prairies near riparian woodland and are in Kansas, Iowa, Tennessee, North Carolina, north-western Florida, and along the Gulf Coast states to Texas.**



**Mississippi Kites will prey mainly on insects such as dragon flies and grasshoppers and sometimes small snakes will be it's victim.**

Source: <http://birds.audubon.org/birds/mississippi-kite>

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WINTERS, TEXAS



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