

## **Moving with the Birds**

By Martin Hagne

I recently moved into a different home, leaving the bayou front for a wooded city block. We will miss the water birds, but we're already finding a whole new set of birds to enjoy! To me, exploring new places to see what bird species, and other flora and fauna, are around the next corner is what makes birding so interesting and exciting! What will I encounter next? I can't say how many hundreds, maybe thousands, of times, I had my breath taken away by nature's beauty, complexity, and intricacies.

One of the first birds I heard from the trees behind the yard was the distinctive call of a Mississippi Kite! I've never lived in a place where kites nest in the neighborhood before. I knew they used residential neighborhoods to nest and to raise their young, and I've seen them in other's yards before, but... here is our "own" pair! It will be a pleasure to walk out into the yard in the morning hearing that call! It will be nice just knowing that they're there, at least till it's time for them to head south for the winter. We had a pair of Great Horned Owls we enjoyed watching across the bayou, on the island, at the old house. Now we have the opportunity to watch these kites!

And who knows what wintering bird may show up! There is always a rotation of different birds coming or going, or just moving through. It's part of that newness that really never gets old in the birding world. And at the same time it's also a welcome reoccurrence when the winter birds show up or when spring brings the summer birds, and so on. There's always something to enjoy and look forward to.

Birds, besides being little engineered marvels, can take your mind off the daily issues of this world and your life. And they normally bring you outdoors, which is just plain good for you anyhow! We know, through studies and science, that spending time outdoors helps us in so many ways, both physically and emotionally. And there is nothing like the peace one gets when you can escape into the wilderness, even just a tiny, wooded patch somewhere, or on the water, anywhere really. It reduces your stress level greatly.

There are so many ways to enjoy birds and birding, even if it's just through your kitchen window at home. Maybe you put up a feeder or two, or a big array of them! Maybe you enjoy the birds in the city park, or on the beach when you visit. Or maybe you get really bitten by the birding bug and buy fancy binoculars and travel all over the world. That's the beauty of enjoying birds... you can do it at any level and anywhere you wish. I have the privilege of enjoying birds through my work here at the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory! It's still work, but what a very nice perk!

Take some time and watch the birds around you this summer. They are everywhere, albeit in a much-reduced number than years past, but they are here. Enjoy them. Do what you can to protect what we have left. And let them help you through the day!

Photo: by Mike Williams  
A Mississippi Kite at rest on a power line.