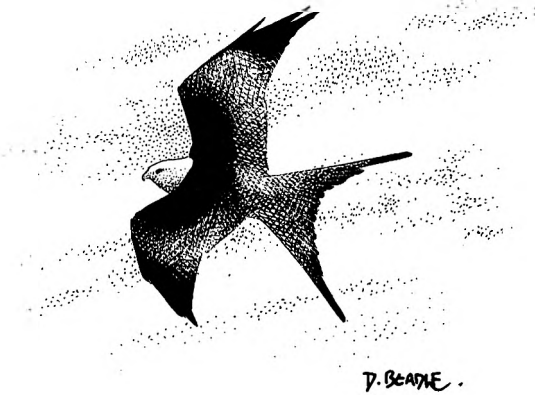


## American Swallow-tailed Kites *Elanoides forficatus* in Cuba: an exciting occurrence

Juan Pedro Soy



American Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* (D. Beadle)

On 9 March 1995 I witnessed a most exciting event over the National Zoological Park of Cuba, about 10 km from Havana, when a flock of nine American Swallow-tailed Kites *Elanoides forficatus forficatus* appeared, soaring and performing aerial stunts (it was a windy day) at a height of about 150 m over the zoo and a nearby dam. The birds were also calling and the local Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* population was evidently alarmed by the unusual spectacle. At 11h00 on the same day, my colleagues Alejandro Llanes and José Fernández Milera

counted up to 21 kites in a flock over the Institute of Ecology and Systematics, situated adjacent to the zoo.

This area where the kites were observed has been reported as a corridor for migratory birds, and a gathering place for a number of species on their northward spring migration<sup>2</sup>.

The kite is reported as a rare winter transient in Cuba<sup>1</sup>, and I am unaware of such a large number of birds being seen on one occasion in the country. The event filled all of us with a sense of joy, and needs to be mentioned, not only because of its scientific importance, but because it causes happiness and optimism to those who appreciate nature and believe in conservation.

### References

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