

29-88-17

DOCUMENTATION OF LATILONG PAPE BIRD SIGHTING
FOR
THE COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' RECORDS

A

Species: Lesser Nighthawk
(Vernacular name)

Chordeiles acutipennis
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): June 20, 1987 Time Bird Seen: 4:55 am to

Locality: About 5 miles southwest of Montrose, Colorado
On Dave Wood Road; approx. 107 56' and 38 25'
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: None

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: Minolta SRT 101

Number of birds seen: one Sex: female Plumage: breeding

Light conditions:

Distance from bird, and how measured:

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

The bird was resting, "perched" in the middle of the asphalt road in the dim light before dawn. It flew up and hit the front of my car as I approached. I picked up the fresh specimen and froze it about noon that day.

The specimen was sent to the Denver Museum of Nat. Hist. about a week later to be prepared as a study skin.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Open country on the edge of scattered farm land. The immediate area was near a farm house adjacent to a large irrigation canal with scattered large trees, mainly cottonwoods. The adjacent area was mainly a slope rising to a sparse pinyon-juniper woodland.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

David Galinat also saw the specimen.

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field. I immediately noted that the bird seemed very small for a Common Nighthawk; later that day it measured $8\frac{1}{4}$ " long. with a wingspan about 19" when stretched. The folded wingtips are shorter than the tail by about 1 cm. Tips of outer 2 primaries and tips of tail feathers were worn, showing some fraying. The outermost (1st) primary was the same length as the 2nd, although in spread wing it appeared barely shorter. Overall it was warmly colored, being brownish gray above and buffy brown below. Above, the back, nape and wing coverts were mottled warm brown and cinnamon and were concolor. The tail is nearly square, showing a slight notch when spread and barred buff and brown with no white bar. The breast and belly was fawn colored, narrowly barred with brown. The primaries and secondaries are grayish-brown with secondaries barred and spotted with buff. The primaries are heavily spotted with buff which forms loose rows in the spread wing. The spots are smaller and less numerous in the outer-most primaries--there are only two near the base of the last primary. The buff nighthawk "bar" in the outer wing is formed by larger buff spots on four outer primaries--this bar is buff, not white. It is roughly even in width from front to back and does not taper towards the rear very much. The bar is $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way from the bend of the wing to the wingtip (inner edge is 11 cm from bend; total length from bend 17.5cm). Has small white throat patch.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery--
i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

Not heard.

List similar species and how you eliminated them: Common Poorwill is smaller yet; primaries and secondaries evenly banded throughout; lacks bold bar across primaries; less evenly barred below; has white-tipped tail feathers. Common Nighthawk is larger; both sexes have white, not buffy bar in wing; primaries lack the buff spots seen in Lesser Nighthawk. Common Nighthawk has bar in wing about halfway from bend, not $\frac{2}{3}$'s of the way. Common Nighthawk grayer, less warmly colored with blacker bars below; does not show rows of spots in folded wing like this bird. Common Nighthawk tends to show a more pointed wing due to the (usually) longer outer primary (rarely same length in non-molting bird). Lesser Nighthawk has more rounded wing shape due to longer second primary or equal length first and second primary. This bird is not a juvenile (too early and primaries and tail feathers show wear).

Prior experience with this and similar species:

I have seen all the nightjars regularly occurring in N.A. I have seen Lesser Nighthawks on several occasions in S.E. Arizona and a few times in Central America. I have seen Common Nighthawk both in flight and perched many times.

This report was written from notes made during x after ___ observation; from memory___.

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Signature: *Mark Janos*

Return Form To: CFO Records Committee
c/o Curator - Dept. of Zoological Collections
Denver Museum of Natural History
City Park
Denver, CO 80205

29-88-19

A note of addendum to the Lesser Nighthawk record:

The Lesser Nighthawk record from Montrose, Colorado (record 29-88-19) is specimen #39386 at the Denver Museum of Natural History. It has been examined by Roxie Laybourne at the Smithsonian Institution and was felt by her to be a Lesser Nighthawk. This according to Betsy Webb per a telephone conversation I had with her in 1988.

Mark Janor