

SPECIES: LESSER NIGHTHAWK

Chordeiles acutipennis

29-72-25

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name)

DATE(S): July 6, 1992

TIME OF OBSERVATION: 2030 for about 2 minutes

EXACT LOCATION: Highline Reservoir SRA.

NEAREST TOWN: Loma

COUNTY: Mesa

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD:

None that I am aware of.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: 10X50 Bushnell Binoculars (which were useless when bird was 10' overhead.)

WEATHER CONDITIONS: Clear sky, setting sun; Wind, 15 MPH from SW; Temperature 85°F

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION: Not a factor due to lateness of the day.

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: 10' up to 100'; estimated.

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: One SEX: Unknown. PLUMAGE: Adult.

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR: Flew in erratic, bounding motion occasionally fluttering as if pick off an insect. Flew through and around sparse hardwood plantings in the campground area very close to the ground.

HEAD & NECK (forehead, crown, auricular & malar regions, median line, etc.):

Short necked. Head and neck areas mottled brownish-gray.

EYES & LORES (supercilium, eye-ring, eye-stripe, color, etc.):

Not noted.

LOWER & UPPER MANDIBLES (color & shape): Very small, short.

LEGS & FEET: Not noted.

UPPERPARTS (nape, back, rump, uppertail coverts, etc.):

Upperparts mottled brownish-gray throughout.

UNDERPARTS (chin, throat, belly, sides, flanks, crissum, etc.):

White throat. Rest of underparts (easily seen as the bird fluttered about immediately over my head) were generally a pale, buffy-brown. Undertail coverts were buffy-brown.

RETRICES (inner, middle & outer tail feathers; color, pattern, shape, etc.):

Long, slender, notched tail. Underside of tail brownish, strongly barred with black; there was an obvious white sub-terminal band as viewed from below.

WINGS (color, length, shape, bars, coverts, etc.):

Long, rather pointed wings (but more rounded than in *C. minor*). There was an obvious buffy-white patch crossing the outer primaries as viewed from below.

VOCALIZATION (call/song, method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight):

Never uttered a sound.

HABITAT: Sparse Cottonwood/Russian Olive plantings in the campground along the east side of the reservoir; the entire surrounding area is low-land, arid, rocky desert-like habitat.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*): Very similar but flight with deeper, more deliberate strokes with less fluttering here and there. Wings more pointed. Patch across primaries is white, more prominent and contrasting than buffy patch of *C. acutipennis*. Patch is closer to the bend of the wing in *C. minor*. Undertail coverts are white.

COMMON POORWILL (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*): Smaller, with shorter tail and rounded wings. Tail has conspicuous white corners. Lacks white/buffy mark across primaries. Has white throat band which is bordered by black on face and black on upper breast.

WHIP-POOR-WILL (*Caprimulgus vociferus*): Tail marked with very large, white corners. Lacks white/buffy marks across primaries.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

LESSER NIGHTHAWK: Seen numerous times in southern Arizona when I lived there in the early 1960's. Since then have seen in southern Arizona during many visits (as recently as May of this year). Have seen in Death Valley of California in mid-1970's. Have never seen before in Colorado.

COMMON POORWILL: Seen many times in Colorado since 1964, most often during Spring & Fall migration when I have nearly stepped on individuals sleeping on the ground. Also seen in California (Yosemite N.P.) and throughout southern Arizona.

WHIP-POOR-WILL: Once a common summer bird on Long Island, New York where I would see them every year in the 1950's & 1960's. Seen in southern Arizona; once in Colorado.

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds. Helped confirm observation

THIS REPORT WRITTEN FROM NOTES MADE DURING ☒ AFTER ☐ OBSERVATION; ☒ FROM MEMORY

NAME: JACK REDDALL

SIGNATURE: Jack Reddall

DATE: July 10, 1992