

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

ACCEPTED 7-0

LESSER NIGHTHAWK

*Chordeiles acutipennis*Location: Lake Henry, Ordway, Crowley County, ColoradoDate: May 12, 1997Setting:

I was birding with Brandon Percival and Bob Dickson late morning on the 12th. We were checking out the "grove" at the south end of Lake Henry. The grove is a small wood-lot consisting mainly of elms. We flushed a male nighthawk nine times between 11:20 a.m. and 11:50 a.m. We were able to see it clearly in flight and perched on quite large horizontal branches. We observed it in full sun. On the last "flush" the bird flew directly at me, then over my head, before flying on. I got excellent views of the bird and the spread wing. We observed the birds with binoculars (mine are B & L Elite 10 x 42s). We saw it repeatedly and discussed the visible fieldmarks that we felt made it a Lesser as opposed to a Common Nighthawk.

Description:

This bird was a nightjar. It perched horizontally on weak legs and feet, flew like a small falcon on generally angled and pointed wings and had a tiny bill. It was a male. It was quite small, about 10" long with a slight, slim build. It was generally very brown in tone. The uppersides were a fairly uniform, mottled brown with dark brown and gray flecks. The chin and throat were white. The upper breast was finely barred blackish on dirty white. In flight, the bird showed a single, narrow subterminal white tail band and fainter barring proximally on the notched tail. The spread wing showed an incomplete bar, not quite spanning the width of the wing, that was located about 2/3s of the way from the wrist bend to the wing tip. The (first) outer primary was clearly about 1/2" shorter than the second primary. When perched, the primaries were visible as a blackish streak from the mid-point of the folded wing to the tip. We could see a small white squarish spot that was the folded white "bar" of the wing. Proximal to that spot was another dull white spot, similar to the pattern of spots anterior to the buffy wingbar of the female Lesser Nighthawk, only in this case whitish, not buffy.

Similar Species:

The posture and shape, with the tiny bill and weak legs indicate a nightjar. The short forked tail and white bar in the wings indicate a nighthawk. This bird differed from Common Nighthawk as follows: 1) smaller size; 2) browner tones to the plumage; 3) short outer primary compared to the second primary; 4) incomplete white wing bar, 2/3s of the way from the bend of the wing to the tip; 5) dull white spots on the primaries anterior to the white bar.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Lesser and Common nighthawks, including once before in Colorado.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

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Mark Janos

2 white wing bars.
Yellow underparts
(fore) & white (aft)
undertail, lower
belly.

→ Lake Holbrook

* Lesser Nighthawk - 1♂

Flushed 9 times between

~ 11:20 - 11:50 am. Full

sun. Seen perched & in

flight. Small, ~ 10";

slim; slight.

Very brown in tone

Upper sides uniform

mottled brown w/ dark
brown & gray flecks.

Clin w/ white throat
patch. Upper breast
streaked brown on tan,

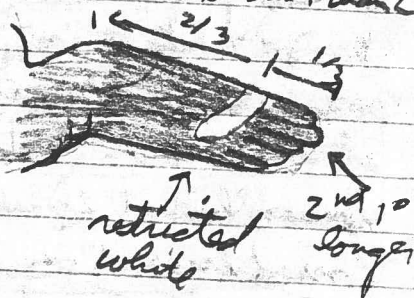
lower breast finely
barred blackish on

dirty white. Tan bars
apparent on folded outer
primaries.

In flight, white tail
band.

Wing w/ restricted
white bar ~ $\frac{2}{3}$ of way

out from bend of wing
Outer 1st ~ $\frac{1}{2}$ " shorter than 2nd



16 May 1997
Lake Henry

- * Hooded Warbler 1 ♀
- * Magnolia Warbler 1 ♂
- " " 1 ♀
- * Whimbrel 1
- * Am Redstart 1 im ♂
- * W.W. Pewee 1 Fog late.
- Baltimore Oriole 1 ♂
- * Least Flycatcher 1
- Balt x Bullock's Oriole 1 ♂