

1998-79

ACCEPTED (7-0)

PO Box 379  
Cape May, NJ  
08204

rec'd 7-3-98  
✓ 3

Lesser Nighthawk  
Clifton ponds, near Grand Junction  
11 June 1998

We had been told that Coen Dexter had found one or more Lesser Nighthawks at the Clifton ponds near Grand Junction the week or two previous to our arrival in the area. So we looked for it/them in the early evening on 11 June 1998. Fairly soon after starting to look through the growing number of Common Nighthawks (now approx. 7:30 PM) we found a single Lesser among them, providing wonderful direct, side-by-side comparisons in good light. I was able to easily show the bird to my entire tour group, many of whom mentioned that it was the best nighthawk ID lesson they could ever have hoped for. We saw the bird off and on for an hour, as the Common Nighthawk numbers built up to at least 700 birds just a little before dark. We never for sure saw more than one Lesser.

Following is a description of the bird copied from my field notes:

"Easily could pick out bird by its smaller size (about 80% of a Common's size), browner plumage, and slightly different wing and overall shape and flight style. Light (off-whitish) patch in wing duller than in most Commons (and definitely harder to see from above) and located farther out on wing than in Commons. [This latter difference can be difficult to judge when the species are separate, but when they are side-by-side I have found it to be quite distinct.] Outermost primary *not* longer than next inner primary, so wingtip (or "hand") appeared somewhat more rounded. Belly and undertail coverts brownish and did not contrast with remainder of underparts as in most Commons."



-- Paul Lehman