

## COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

ACCEPT 7-0

Rcd 1/20/00 wpl

LESSER NIGHTHAWK (3)  
*Chordeiles acutipennis*

Location: Lamar Community College grove = Willow Creek; Lamar; Prowers County; Colorado

Date: May 9, 1999

Setting:

These birds were found on the day following a large CFO field trip when many birders were still present, so quite a few people saw these birds. The birds were found mid-morning on a nice day for birding. They were mainly in the open park-like area of the sand hills at the south end of Willow Park. Though we did flush one from the ground, they landed and perched on medium-sized diameter horizontal limbs of area cottonwoods. These were usually 20-30 feet of the ground and we were able to observe the birds both perched and in flight. Several of us set up scopes on the perched birds. Distances were 20-50 feet. I used B&L Elite 10x40 binoculars. All birds were silent.

Description:

All three were clearly nightjars. They perched horizontally by laying at an angle, or sometimes lengthwise, on branches. The birds flew like light, erratic moths on bluntly rounded wings bent at the "wrist". All three were females. They were quite small, about 10" long with a slim build. They were generally very brownish, not blackish, in overall color tone. The uppersides were a fairly uniform, mottled brown with dark brown and gray flecks. The chin and throat were pale. The upper breast was finely barred blackish on dirty white. In flight, the birds showed indistinct barring on the notched tail. The spread wing showed a subterminal 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 shorter than the second primary, giving the bird a rounded wing appearance. 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, tan, squarish spot that was the folded tan "bar" of the wing. In flight, the wingbar was tan and there were rows of tan spots proximal to the large bar, on the primaries.

Similar Species:

The posture and shape, with the tiny bill and weak legs indicate a nightjar. The short forked tail and 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 (not other way around); 4) incomplete tan wing bar, 2/3s of the way (not half way) from the bend of the wing to the tip; 5) rows of tan spots on the primaries anterior to the wing bar (Common Nighthawk totally lacks this feature)..

Experience with Species:

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

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

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