

COMMON NIGHTHAWK

Chordeiles minor

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

C.m. minor?

The Common Nighthawk breeds through most of North America and S through e. Mexico and Central America to Panama, migrates southward in fall (casually through se. Alaska), and winters in South America (AOU 1998). It has been recorded as a vagrant to Iceland, Britain, and the Faeroe and Azore Is (Cramp and Simmons 1985) and, in the Pacific area, to Clipperton I (Howell et al. 1993) and the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands*, where there is a single record.

A nighthawk was observed daily by USFWS biologists at Tern I., **French Frigate**, 21 July-3 Sep 1986, during which time it was photographed at close range ([HRBP 0577-0586](#)). It was initially identified as a possible Lesser Nighthawk *C. acutipennis* (*E* 46:176, *AB* 40:1258) but later examination of photographs proved it to be a Common Nighthawk (*E* 47:113). The plumage is very dark, consistent with the expected nominate subspecies (*C. m. minor*), which breeds in Alaska, rather than with most of the paler w. N American subspecies, although the Pacific coastal *C.m. hesperus* may not be ruled out.

Two other reports of Caprimulgids in Hawaii are of a "goatsucker (nighthawk or whip-poor-will)" on Midway sometime before 1936 (Hadden 1941; *E* 4:42) and of a nighthawk observed briefly near Hawi, Hawai'i I, at dusk 16 Sep 1985. A description of the latter bird included the distinctive "peent" call and erratic flight of a Common Nighthawk but we prefer to consider this identification unsubstantiated due to the brevity of observation.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2009. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 1 (31 December 2009) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>