

COMMON NIGHTHAWK

Chordeiles minor

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

C.m. minor?

The Common Nighthawk breeds throughout most of North America 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.

Three 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), of a nighthawk observed briefly near Hawi, Hawai'i I, at dusk 16 Sep 1985, and a nighthawk reported from Kealia Pond NWR around 1 Oct 2013. A description of the Hawi bird included the distinctive "peent" call and erratic flight of a Common Nighthawk but we prefer to consider this and the other identifications unsubstantiated due to the brevity of observations.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>