

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: Lesser Nighthawk, *Chordeiles acutipennis*

2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):

1; probably second year male in formative plumage

3. Parish: Cameron

Specific Locality: Willow Island

4. Date(s) when observed: 1 May 2021

Also possibly seen on 30 April and 2 May, but conservatively, the date above.

5. Time(s) of day when observed: From about 10:30 for about an hour

6. Reporting observer and city/state address

Reporting observer: Paul E. Conover
City: Lafayette

7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): Gary Broussard, Charlotte Chehotsky, James Smithers.

8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s): Several other birders subsequently saw bird.

9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Light was fine, but shaded perch meant loss of light for photos.

10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Nikon scope with 20-60 zoom, cellphone cam, Nikon D3300.

11. Distance to bird(s): ca. 50 feet

12. Duration of observation: About an hour

13. Habitat: Remnant cheniere with large oaks

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation:

A nighthawk flushed from a perch in the oaks and was attacked by a mockingbird. The nighthawk resettled and we started looking for it. JS relocated the bird but it was blocked by branches for me. I lowered the camera zoom to about 70mm and waited for the bird to flush and got a flight photo at that point. JS or CC got a perched photo which puzzled me

on the camera screen as it seemed to have the plain paler-centered wing panel center of Common Nighthawk. However, my photo appeared better for Lesser, and finding the bird perched we were able to ascertain diagnostic features for Lesser. The bird relocated and we were able to scope it for others to see.

15. Description:

Nightjar with white band across primaries.

Buff markings on primaries proximal to white bands were obvious and show well in photos. The triple rows of pale upperwing covert tips often visible on Lesser were largely obscured by the presence of many pale gray vermiculated feathers among wing coverts, giving this bird's covert panel a large pale area in the middle more typical of Common Nighthawk.

Appeared to have small whitish or off-white subterminal spots although hard to see in photos. Buff undertail with fine, somewhat narrow brown bracket-shaped markings.

In flight band on wing fell even with tip of p6, much closer to wingtip than on Common.

The presence of so much gray on the wing panels is interesting. The feathers resembled the gray, lightly-patterned feathers of juvenile nighthawks, and I wonder if these were indeed retained. The bird's primaries and tail seem worn, perhaps with remnants of pale tips to the primaries, so the bird might be a second-year individual. The off-white subterminal tail band might support that. The BNA account for Lesser Nighthawk notes that formative plumage can include retained juvenile median and greater coverts, and I think explains this bird's aspect. The incomplete row of pale-tipped median coverts suggests that as a possibility.

16. Voice: not heard

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): Common eliminated by several features above.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Yes, by me and by other observers if they submit them.

19. Previous experience with this species: Seen extensively out west, as well as on about a dozen occasions in Louisiana.

20. Identification aids: I feel pretty well-versed in expected nighthawk species.

21. This description is written from: Memory and photo review.

22. Are you positive of your identification? Yes.

23. Date: 18 May 2021





