

Breeding Nighthawks in Central America.—The Middle American distribution of the Common and Lesser nighthawks (*C. minor* and *C. acutipennis*) is still far from clear. Until very recently the Common Nighthawk was not known to breed south of Chiapas, México, and there seemed to be a gap in the breeding range of the more tropical Lesser Nighthawk between Nicaragua and Colombia. A small, dark, rufescent race of the Common Nighthawk, described as *C. minor panamensis* (Eisenmann, Amer. Mus. Novit., no. 2094, 1962:1–21), has been found breeding in Panamá and has been collected also in Costa Rica. In the same paper I pointed out that specimens of the Lesser Nighthawk taken in Costa Rica and Panamá during June and July suggested breeding in those countries and agreed with a breeding female from Nicaragua in resembling the South American nominate *acutipennis* more than any Mexican race. While my paper was in press, Dr. K. C. Parkes sent me several examples of *Chordeiles* collected in Honduras by A. C. Twomey and R. W. Hawkins which throw light on the nighthawk populations in an intervening area of Central America.

Two males of *Chordeiles minor* from Sihuatepeque, Honduras, on July 8, 1951 (“T.S.E.”; wing 181, 193; tail 100, 104 mm.), seem allocable to the Chiapas race, *C. m. neotropicalis* Selander and Alvarez del Toro (Condor, 57, 1955:144–147), although the ventral banding appears slightly darker. A male and female (“O.N.E.”), taken on July 25, 1951, at Lake Yohoa (wing ♂ 193, ♀ 180; tail ♂ 100, ♀ 98) are darker (especially the female), less mottled with buff above, and more broadly banded with dusky below, thus indicating some trend toward the recently described *panamensis*. These four examples probably represent a population breeding in Honduras, although in view of the gonadal regression, the breeding season must have passed. Another female from Lake Yohoa, taken on August 28, 1951, is larger (wing 187, tail 107), looks most like *chapmani* of Florida and the eastern Gulf coast, and may well be a migrant.

Two females of *Chordeiles acutipennis* from Isla Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras, taken on April 18, 1948, look so much like typical *micromeris* of Yucatán that they may well be migrants en route to that peninsula. A male, taken on June 14, 1950, at Coyoles on the mainland, is marked “breeding,” and a female taken on June 25, 1958, at San Esteban is labelled “ovaries enlarged.” Another female from Coyoles, dated June 21, 1950, without gonadal indication, is labelled as having skull fully ossified; this bird has very worn juvenal primaries and is doubtless a bird which hatched the previous year. These three examples resemble the Chiapas population described by Brodtkorb (Auk, 57, 1940: 542–549) as *C. a. littoralis*, but are grayer dorsally with somewhat less buffy mottling, thus showing some trend toward *micromeris* of Yucatán. They do not approach the small, dark, ruddy form breeding in Nicaragua, which has also been collected in Costa Rica and Panamá.

Although *C. minor* tends to be blacker than *C. acutipennis*, some Middle American populations of the two species resemble each other rather closely in color (Eisenmann, *op. cit.*). As both species may occur locally in close proximity, problems of field identification are presented in studies in which collection of specimens may be undesirable. Voice affords the best field basis for recognition, but sitting or perched birds are usually silent. Size differences are generally unreliable without direct comparison. The standard identifying character in skins is the relative position of the wing band. In flying birds it is often difficult to determine positively whether the band is midway across the wing (*minor*) or nearer the tip (*acutipennis*); and, as the under side of the band in females of the Lesser Nighthawk is rather white, the color of the band is probably not reliable even for separating flying females. When birds are perched, they often can be closely approached; then an aid in determining the position of wing band is to note whether the tips of the mottled inner secondaries (“tertials”) extend beyond the white primary band (*minor*) or fail to reach or barely reach the band (*acutipennis*). In some museum specimens the relative position of the tips of the secondaries to the primaries is altered by stripping the wing in skinning. Perched females and immature males of *acutipennis* show on the closed wing a series of tawny mottlings or spots on the basal half of the primaries, between the wing band and the primary coverts; this mottling is absent in *minor* and in many adult male *acutipennis*, so that the primaries appear solid blackish, except for the white band. In females and immature males of *minor* the white wing band does not extend uninterruptedly across to the outer web of the outermost primary and often does not even reach the outer web of the ninth, so that the outer edge of the closed wing shows a narrow blackish border adjacent to the white band; in adult males of *acutipennis*, and also in some adult males of *minor*, the white band extends broadly to the edge of the wing. Thus at close range female and immatures (and some adult males) of *acutipennis* can be identified if tawny mottling on the primaries is visible, whereas females and immatures (and

some adult males) of *minor* can be distinguished if a blackish outer border to the white wing band is definitely observed. Individuals showing neither character may be males of either species.—
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