

**SUMMER WHIP-POOR-WILLS (*Caprimulgus vociferous*)
IN SIMPSON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**

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The Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferous*) occurs regularly in southern and central Mississippi during the spring migration (Turcotte and Watts 1999). The southern most counties for summer calling records in Mississippi are Kemper, Winston, Attala and Montgomery Counties (Coffey 1970, 1971; Coffey and Coffey 1971). In 1992, a nest with a downy chick was found in Oktibbeha County (Muth 1992). The range map in Peterson's Field Guide to Eastern Birds (Peterson 1980) shows the summer range extending to the northern portion of Mississippi.

I surveyed an area of northern Simpson County (R1E, and R2E, T12N) between 24 April and 14 September 2000 for breeding populations of the Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). I began evening surveys about 1 hour prior to dark and stayed until 1 hour after dark. My morning surveys started 1 hour before daylight and ended 1 hour after daylight. I drove public access roads along and through Weyerhaeuser timberlands to determine if nighthawks were using cutovers as nesting areas. I visited the survey area 27 times during the summer.

During my surveys, I also recorded the presence of Chuck-will's-widows (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) and Whip-poor-wills. On 2 May 2000, I heard a whip-poor-will calling. I often heard the call of Chuck-will's-widows in my nighthawk study area in Hillsborough County, Florida, and the difference in the whip-poor-will call was obvious. The

Chuck-will's-widow typically has a 4 syllable call, stressing the third syllable, with the first two receiving about the same stress (Chuck-wills-**wid**'ow; bold text indicates emphasis on this syllable). The Whip-poor-will usually has a 3 syllable call, with minor emphasis on the first and stronger emphasis on the third syllable (whip'-p o-**willll**; bold text indicates emphasis on this syllable) (Sprunt, 1940). I heard a Whip-poor-will call on 2 May 2000 at 19:55H (7:55 pm) at my first survey site on Joe Dear Road. At my next stop (20:05 H; 8:05 pm) I heard another Whip-poor-will call at 20:01H (9:01 pm).

When I visited on 9 May, I heard no Whip-poor-will calls. On 13 May, I drove a different route, traveling CC road on my way to my first stop. At 20:14 H (8:14 pm), I observed 3 Whip-poor-wills circling above the road and was able to obtain a good cassette recording of the call. The size of the three birds was much smaller than typical for a Chuck-will's-widow. That night I heard a Whip-poor-will at a fourth location along the main road.

On 16 May, I again heard and saw Whip-poor-wills at CC Road. As I surveyed throughout the summer, I heard (and occasionally saw) Whip-poor-wills. After 16 May, the Whip-poor-wills called only at the CC Road location and at least three individuals called there throughout the summer. On my final visit on 14 September 2000, I heard only a single individual calling.

The habitat in the Whip-poor-will area was primarily small, planted pines (*Pinus sp.*), about 4 – 6 m in height. The trees were spaced irregularly (2 - 4 m apart), and the spaces between the trees were filled with underbrush. The small pines were surrounded by large pine forests and divided by CC road. The most abundant diurnal birds detected during the study period were the Yellow-breasted

Chat (*Icteria virens*) and Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*). Chuck-will's-widows occasionally visited the southwest corner of the Whip-poor-will area.

While I heard Whip-poor-wills call until 14 September, I last heard the Chuck-will's-widows calling on 24 July 2000.

By increasing the number of surveys for breeding birds, during the period between dusk and dawn, the chances of locating nesting Whip-poor-wills in south central Mississippi may increase.

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