

The Pacific Nighthawk

BY JOSEPH GRINNELL

Chordeiles virginianus hesperis new subspecies.

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS—Most nearly resembling *Ch. v. virginianus*, but:—outer surface of closed wing grayer toned; lower tail-coverts and feathers of belly region more narrowly and sparsely dark-barred; and, in the male, white patches on throat, wings, and tail more extensive.

TYPE—♂ adult; No. 6917 Coll. J. G.; Bear Lake, 6700 feet alt., San Bernardino Mts., California; July 30, 1905; collected by J. Grinnell and J. Dixon.

DISTRIBUTION—The race is based on 14 fresh specimens from the San Bernardino Mountains, California, where the species breeds in the Canadian Zone (7000-9000 feet), descending in its evening insect-hunts thru Transition (as low as 5000 feet). An example from Newport, Oregon, and several from the central Sierras (Amador and El Dorado Counties), California, are closely similar; so that it is probable that *Ch. v. hesperis* is the race visiting the whole Pacific Coast of the U. S. in summer, and breeding in the Canadian Zone from the San Bernardino Mountains northward.

REMARKS—*Ch. v. hesperis* is equal in size to the largest northern representatives of *Ch. v. virginianus*, that is, somewhat larger than examples of the latter race from Maryland and Virginia, and notably larger than the several races from the southern border of the U. S. In tone of coloration the male is much darker than in either *Ch. v. sennetti* or *Ch. v. henryi*. Altho somewhat lighter than *virginianus*, this is in the direction of pale gray and white rather than ochraceous. The extended mottling of the otherwise blackish feathers dorsally is responsible for this lighter tone, and especially notable is the extensive silvery gray mottling on the wing coverts. Yet this dorsal tone does not nearly reach the paleness of *sennetti*. The decrease in width and numbers of the dark bars on the belly and crissum gives that portion of the lower surface a decidedly whitish cast, as in *henryi*. But instead of a great extension of ochraceous or tawny dorsally as in the latter form, the brown tints are even less intense and extensive than in *virginianus*. The face region of *hesperis* is much paler than in *virginianus*, due to replacement of restricted deep tawny markings with larger ones of pale ochraceous. The same is true of the chest. The white patches on the throat, primaries, and rectrices of *hesperis* average decidedly larger. The patch on the outer primary invades across the shaft to include the outer web; and the same is observable of the patches on the tail-feathers.

Many of the above remarks apply also to the female, except of course where sexual differences are involved. The female of *hesperis* is gray rather than tawny, and is thus at once distinguishable from the female of *henryi*.

The nighthawks of the West deserve thoro overhauling. It is evident from the relatively scant material at hand that the name "*henryi*," as generally employed of late, is an aggregate, including at least three races. The birds breeding in portions of southern Texas are altogether different from those of Arizona and New Mexico (= *henryi*), while Rocky Mountain examples differ from both. I have seen no specimens of true *henryi* from California, and it is probable that all, or nearly all, of our references to *henryi* belong under the new name *hesperis*. Material is desirable from many localities—well-prepared skins, *free from grease*. Nighthawks are troublesome to save in good shape; and as I have lately learned, to give proper results a nighthawk skin demands about three times the time and patience that most any other bird does.

I am under obligation to the United States National Museum, thru Dr. C. W. Richmond, Acting Curator of its Division of Birds, for the loan of a pertinent series of nighthawks.

Pasadena, California.