



2022 PROJECT NIGHTHAWK

Common Nighthawk 2022 Nesting Season by Rebecca Suomala, Project Nighthawk Coordinator

It was a challenging summer for nighthawk monitoring. Although we confirmed five nests in the state (compared to nine last year), none were visible and there are, amazingly, no photos from a nest site this year. Thanks to all the years of observations from Project Nighthawk, we can confirm a nest by behavioral patterns but it takes multiple visits and a little luck to record enough behavior to confirm nesting. This summer we had nine sites where we suspect nesting but just couldn't confirm. The majority were in the Ossipee area where it is especially difficult to confirm nesting.

Since 2012 I have been consulting on nighthawk nesting at the Lempster wind turbines and was invited to make a field visit this season, my first since 2012. Unfortunately there were no nighthawks this year which was surprising given past activity. We did see a Merlin land in the clearing during our watch and I suspect it was nesting in the area. Merlins will prey on nighthawks so perhaps that discouraged the birds from nesting this year. Read on for the results in each area.

OSSIPEE PINE BARRENS

Fortunately, the number of birds and active sites in the Ossipee pine barrens was similar to other years. With only two partial watches we couldn't confirm breeding but birds were active at five or six sites. The pine barrens remain a stronghold for the species in the state but there are fewer than ten potential nesting sites and typically only five or so are active in a given year. One surprise was a female Common Nighthawk photographed by Andrea Robbins roosting on the ground in Ossipee on August 12, 2022. Adult nighthawks typically roost in trees and we



Andrea Robbins photographed this female Common Nighthawk on the ground in the Ossipee Pine Barrens, NH on August 12, 2022.

Ossipee area Results

- ◆ 2 watches held

8-9 Males

2 Females

Nesting Sites

- ◆ Depot Rd. Clearcut(probable)
- ◆ Kennet Lumber east (possible)
- ◆ Red Baron (probable)
- ◆ Thicket NE (or Thicket) (probable)
- ◆ West Branch Pine Barrens (probable)

usually only see them on the ground near a nest or young. Most chicks have fledged by August, but this female only flew 20 feet suggesting that a young bird might have been roosting on the ground nearby. This sighting wasn't far from "The Thicket" where we had an active male.

CONCORD AREA

Although there were similar numbers of birds in the Concord area, June temperatures were fairly cool and activity was subdued. When it heated up in July, birds became regular at sites we thought were inactive! That included Steeplegate Mall. In June we had hardly any activity at the former BonTon and virtually nothing at Sears, then in July both birds were back to their usual late-night activity and we were able to confirm breeding. Most of the summer we were in a drought and it was very dry but

one of the few torrential rainstorms we had on July 12 resulted in failure at the Concord Airport. Right before the storm we had also discovered two of our missing males displaying nearby, one at the Karner Blue Easement. Behavior seemed to indicate nesting, but activity ceased after the storm so we couldn't be sure.

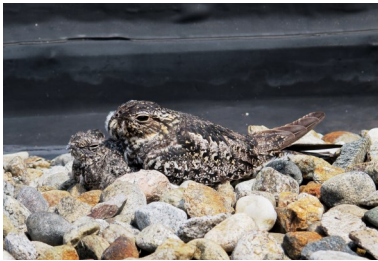
Concord Results

- ◆ 2 watches held
- 8 males*
- 3-4 females*

Nesting Sites

- ◆ 60 Regional Dr. (possible)
- ◆ Concord Airport NE
- ◆ Concord Sand & Gravel (possible)
- ◆ EJ Prescott
- ◆ Karner Blue Easement (possible)
- ◆ Pembroke Sand & Gravel
- ◆ Steeplegate Mall -
BonTon end
Sears end

Memories from years past!



Female with chick in Keene July 1, 2021 (left).
Photo by Brett Amy Thelen

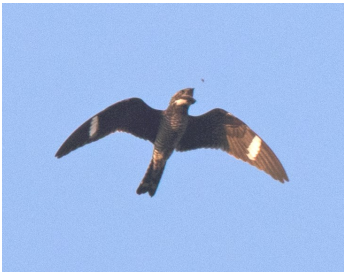


Nighthawk perched at NH Audubon's McClane Center on May 20, 2019 (right).
Photo by Zeke Cornell

Two chicks at Clough Mill Road, Concord in 2020 (right).
Photo by Rebecca Suomala



A migrating nighthawk going after an insect in 2017 (right). Photo by David Lipsy



KEENE

We are sad to report that Keene had no nighthawks this year for the first time since Project Nighthawk began in 2007. It was very sad for the Keene volunteers and Brett Thelen who coordinates the Keene watches, especially after having a chick each of the last two years. Keene was the last remaining downtown area in New Hampshire where

nighthawks were present. Concord had two downtown nighthawk territories in 2007 but they are gone, and nighthawks are now present only outside of town to the east where there are still pine barrens. Many years ago, Manchester was a stronghold for nighthawks but they were long gone before Project Nighthawk even started.

Keene Results

- ◆ 2 watches held
- ◆ Total: no activity

OTHER LOCATIONS

BLACK CAP MOUNTAIN, CONWAY, NH

Charlie Nims had a very active evening watch on Black Cap Mountain in Conway on August 15. He had two males, a probable female, and possibly young calling.

As soon as he came out of the woods to the open area near the summit, one or more nighthawks were seen and heard peenting and booming almost continuously from about 8:00 pm to 9:30 pm at the previous years' presumptive nesting site, confirming breeding.

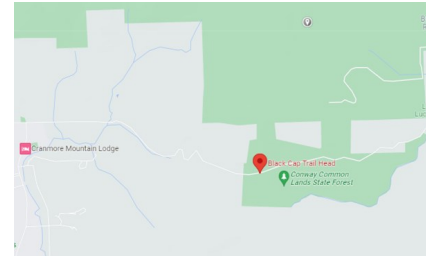
A presumed female flew right around him and was

Female nighthawk on Black Cap Mountain in 2015
Photo by Phil Brown



silent except for the woosh of its wings and then he heard “gurbling” leading him to believe he was very near to a nest.

Other mountains in the area with rocky tops may also support nighthawks. They are active at dusk, so if you’re out for an evening hike in the area keep an eye and ear open for peenting and booming.



Black Cap Trail Head Google Maps Photo



Black Cap Mountain Google Maps Photo

KAMIAH, IDAHO

Former Project Nighthawk volunteer and now Kamiah, Idaho resident Connie Linna submitted this exciting Common Nighthawk siting from June 21, 2022:

I have been hearing a male nighthawk peenting every evening over my house for the last week or so. One night he was here for over an hour. On that night I went out on my front porch to get a better look and when I did a nighthawk flew two feet above my driveway from near my porch down the driveway. I scoured our yard looking for a nesting female to no avail. Today [we] saw a female nighthawk in our front driveway with the male off to the side.

That evening Connie observed a male displaying over her yard, joined by the female and then a “bird bouncing and flapping” in their driveway. “What were they doing??? They were very close to each other.”

According to the *Birds of the World*, courtship starts with the male diving and booming over the female. “Male then lands on ground, near the female, tail spread and waggled from side to side; body rocks and throat puffed, displaying white patch, combined with guttural croaking notes.” Connie thought that was likely what she saw. Unfortunately, the birds did not return.

“In 16 years of watching nighthawks, I have yet to see that courtship display. How lucky!” – Becky Suomala



Female nighthawk June 21, 2022.



Nighthawk pair June 21, 2022.

Photos by Connie Linna

2022 VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the dedicated volunteers who logged over 317 hours for Project Nighthawk and traveled over 1,231 miles to make this project possible. Volunteers help in Concord, Conway, Keene, and Ossipee or may follow up on sightings elsewhere in the state.

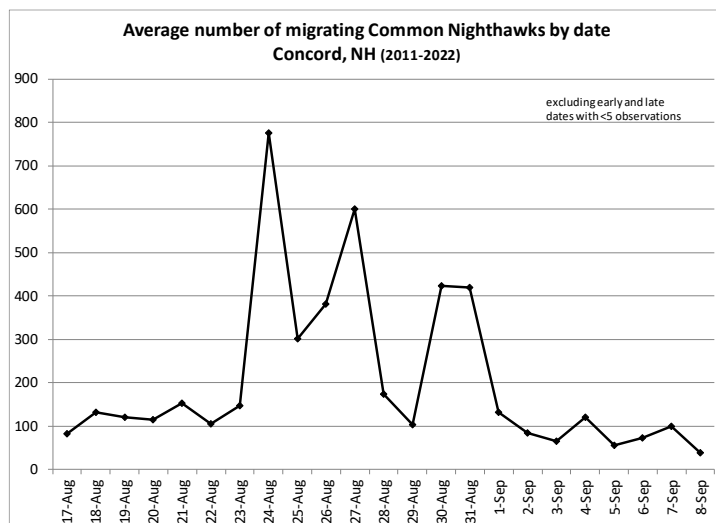
Beth Aronson
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Precious Ozoh
Robert Reynolds
Marsha Richelli
Mallory Root
Karen Seaver

Barbara Skuly
Mark Suomala
Brett Amy Thelen
Robert Vallieres
Wendy Ward

MIGRATION



Zeke Cornell continued to lead the Nighthawk Migration Watch in Concord, NH tallying 5,585 migrating Common Nighthawks between August 16 and September 12. Rob Woodward counted for seven days in Laconia, but with only 295 nighthawks he determined this inland site was not a migration hotspot (see his article in the Fall 2022 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*). Phil Brown of the Harris Center for Conservation Education piloted a new migration watch site on Powdermill Pond in Hancock, tallying 5,339 nighthawks over three weeks. Intern Will Stollsteimer investigated the Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Swanzy as a watch site and had 2,799 migrating nighthawks over two weeks. Where are all these birds coming from? Canada! They breed across southern and boreal Canada and can be abundant in suitable boreal habitats

Interesting fact: The highest nighthawk counts in Concord occur on days with southwest winds.

2022 DONORS

Kathleen Brockett
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Paul West
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Rob Woodward

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in honor of Tracy Holmes
Wendy Howes
Ware River Nature Club



We gratefully acknowledge the many hosts who installed nest patches on their roof tops and the many others who have helped support Project Nighthawk with their donations over the past years.