

**Updated 4/21/2024**

**Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) Monitoring Protocol for Chicago Region  
Chicago Ornithological Society**

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**Establishing Points**

This monitoring protocol is based on point counts. Select four points where you would like to monitor. These locations can be anything such as intersections, parks, your yard, landmarks, specific addresses, or other spots of interest. Points should be at least half a mile apart, but can be farther. Select points you are able to get to and access easily and consistently. These four points will be the same ones you monitor over the course of the season, and hopefully for many years.

We are especially interested in monitoring in areas where Common Nighthawks (CONI) are known to occur. To the extent that you can, consider places you know CONI to occur when considering where your points will be. That said, we are interested in collecting data in areas not necessarily known to have CONI as well. While these areas could be devoid of CONI, it is also possible they have birds present but no one has searched. Points that have no birds to report still provide important data. You are welcome to conduct surveys at more than four points if you are available to do so.

Other factors to consider when choosing your points are selecting spots that are well lit and marked to ensure your safety while walking at night. While not required, consider avoiding main streets to reduce the amount of noise pollution impacting birds detected by ear.

Once you have selected your points, please notify Edward and Stephanie with the gps coordinates and the intersection or landmark defining your points.

**When to Monitor**

Monitoring occurs in three, week-long monitoring periods primarily in the months of June and early July. We ask that monitors monitor their four points on a single night during the periods of June 9-15, June 16-22, and June 23-29. The visits should be conducted at least 3 days apart. For example, if you monitor on June 15 for the first period, then you should wait until June 18 to monitor in the second period.

Monitoring should begin no earlier than 30 minutes before sunset, but can occur anytime thereafter until sunrise. The average sunset time during this period is 8:27pm. For best results, monitoring your four points should ideally happen in the time frame between 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after sunset, but is not required.

Surveys should take place on calm evenings with no precipitation and no high winds (20mph or more). Preference should be given to monitoring on nights when the sky is mostly clear but not required.

## **Data Recording**

When conducting monitoring, you should remain stationary during the 5 minute point count period. You are welcome to travel between your points by whatever means is most convenient for you: walking, biking, driving, etc.

We will be using eBird for ease of data recording and sharing. At each point, start a new checklist using the eBird app. Do not use existing eBird hotspots but rather use a personal location at the survey point for the purposes of monitoring (see below). Record all nighthawks seen or heard during your 5 minute point count. Foraging birds are very mobile, so do your best to avoid double counting individuals. As you record birds, please also indicate the nature of your sighting in the breeding code drop down menu or in notes: visual, “beer” calls (S), or “booming” calls (C).

If you encounter other birds while counting, feel free to record them in eBird as well. It will not hurt our data and is still valuable to eBird.

Once you are done, share the checklist from your monitoring route with “Chicago Nighthawk Project.”

## **Creating eBird Points**

Either on the eBird website or app, begin the process of submitting observations. On the website, click on “Find it on a Map” or “Use Latitude/Longitude” to find your location and place a point there. On the app, let the GPS locate you and then tap on the “Recommended” location which will show as an address. Tap “Rename” and then save.

When prompted for a name, use the format of landmark and the GPS coordinates. Some examples:

*1235 N. Clark St - (41.905561, -87.631494)*

*Webster Ave/Clybourn Ave - (41.921566, -87.664433)*

*Dominican University - (41.902113, -87.822033)*

Do not suggest this new point as a hotspot and do not use an existing hotspot for your monitoring.

## **Safety**

Things to consider to ensure a safe and comfortable monitoring experience include:

- Bringing a friend (birder or otherwise)
- Have a check-in system - notify someone of where you are when and when you'll return
- Traveling in well lit areas and avoid areas with high vehicle traffic
- Carrying a cell phone
- Carrying drinking water (summer nights can be hot too)
- Bringing/wearing bug spray

Your safety is of primary importance. At any point during monitoring you become or feel unsafe, please immediately cease monitoring activity.

**Evaluation**

We are always interested in hearing from you about your experience with any part of monitoring: things that surprised you, things we can do to make monitoring easier, problems that arise, general updates, etc. Let us know by shooting us an email at [edwarhzan@gmail.com](mailto:edwarhzan@gmail.com) and [stephanie.beilke@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.beilke@gmail.com). Any and all comments or suggestions are welcome!