

WHIP-POOR-WILL  
CHUCK WILL'S-WIDOW

Identification

The diurnal identification of these two species is sometimes a problem. This is the case in flight if the tail is not spread, as happens not infrequently. The accompanying table (see reverse) explains what to look for if the tail is spread.

When birds are found perched upon on a branch in such a way that the under tail is visible, identification can be made as explained.

This information applies to adult birds but it is presumed that immature birds would probably resemble the female.

On rare occasions, when a very close approach has been made, the type of bristles at the base of the bill serve to separate the two species. The Chuck-will's-widow has finely branched bristles, the Whip-poor-will unbranched ones.

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		Whip-poor-will	Chuck-will's-widow
Size, helpful but often not safe.		Smaller (9-10")	Larger (11-13")
General color. Good clue but not safe.		Grayer and more dusky	Buffier
Tail, above, when spread	Male	Outer web of outer tail feather is black with a buffy tip. Balance of end half of outer tail feathers is entirely white. This shows as a large area of solid white.	Outer webs of tail feathers are like the female's tail feathers; the inner webs are white. This shows as alternating shafts of white and brown.
	Female	Outer 3 tail feathers are essentially blackish, narrowly barred with buffy, with conspicuous, strongly contrasting whitish, or buffy tips. The net effect is dark outer tail feathers with conspicuous light tips.	Outer 3 tail feathers are widely barred with buffy, they are tipped with buffy, but the tips do not, or do not strongly, contrast with the balance of the tail. The net effect is buffy outer tail feathers.
Tail, below, when closed	Male	The end half, approximately, is white, narrowly tipped with buffy (sometimes more extensive).	The end half, approximately, is buffy.
	Female	Tip of tail buffy. Balance of tail narrowly barred with buffy bands and broadly barred with dark bands. The net effect is a contrasting tail tip.	Tip of tail buffy. Balance of tail broadly barred with buffy and dark bands, the dark bands sometimes narrower. The net effect is a non-contrasting tail tip.
Tail, above, when closed.		Both species, male and female, the tails are quite similar.	
Throat	Male	Black	Buffy
	Female	Throat color not a reliable separation.	