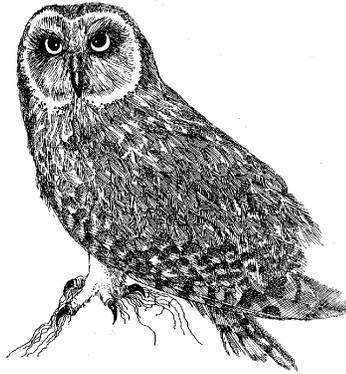


Short-eared Owl - *Asio flammeus* - 15"

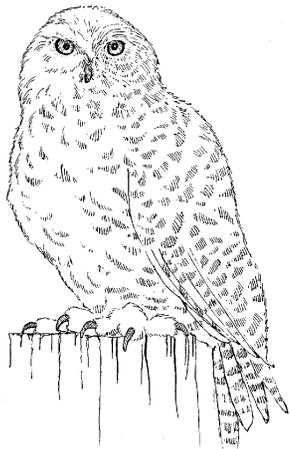
The Short-eared Owl winters in Rhode Island and can be seen at Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge in Middletown and other points along the coast. It prefers open woodlands, marshes and fields. It flaps unevenly and glides low over open areas, sometimes hovering. This owl is usually silent except during courting, when it utters a variety of clucks, barks and squeals.



Snowy Owl

Nyctea scandiaca
25"

This ghostly white visitor from the far north, an irregular migrant in Rhode Island, is only seen in the winter, usually along the coastline. Snowy owls are not pure white, but have considerable mottling on the breast



and back. The female is darker than the male. Its voice is a hoarse *who who*, and sometimes a growling bark or sharp whistle.

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island conducts several Owl Prowls during January and February. If you would like more information or to sign up for one of these programs, please call ASRI at 949-5454.



Resources:

The Nightwatchers, by Angus Cameron and Peter Parnall, Fourwinds Press, NY.

Field Notes of Rhode Island Birds, Dec-Jan 1998 and Dec-Jan 1999, Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

Bird Walks in Rhode Island, by Adam J. Fry, Backcountry Publications, Woodstock, VT.

Guide to Owl Watching in North America, by Donald S. Heintzelman, Dover Publications, Inc., NY.

"Birds of North America", Thayer Birding Software.

Owls in Rhode Island



Audubon Society of Rhode Island
12 Sanderson Road
Smithfield, RI 02917

OVER 100 YEARS OF
EDUCATION - CONSERVATION - ADVOCACY

Owls in Rhode Island

Several species of owls make Rhode Island their home. Some live here year-round; some migrate in and out. Most of our owls are nocturnal, that is, they are active at night. Their large, forward-set eyes allow them to see the slightest movement in very dim conditions but not in total darkness. Although owls' eyes are adapted to seeing dim light, they can see perfectly well during the day. They cannot rotate their eyes, but they have very flexible necks that allow their heads to rotate up to 270°.

Owls have very keen hearing. The circular arrangement of feathers on an owl's face directs sound to its ears. The ears are usually in different positions relative to the side of the head so the owl can pinpoint a sound precisely. The "ears" that many owls sport on top of their heads are not really ears, but tufts of feathers.

An owl's wing feathers have soft edges, making their flight silent. This stealthy flight improves their success in capturing prey.

Owls are active all year. Their breeding season begins in January and February, much earlier than other birds. The females are slightly larger than the males.

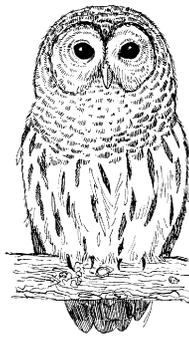
An owl usually swallows its prey whole. The bones, feathers and fur are later coughed up as pellets, and each owl species has a distinctive type of pellet. Scientists can then

study the contents of the pellets to determine what the owl eats.

Barn Owl

Tyto alba - 16"

This pale, heart-faced owl nests in barns and other tall structures, and in holes in cliff faces. In Rhode Island, it is found in Middletown and the cliffs of Block Island. Its calls include a weird, fearful hiss, a frightful scream or a series of clicks.



Barred Owl

Strix varia - 21"

The distinctive call of this owl sounds to some as "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?" A year-round resident, its habitat is dense woodlands, often near water.

Barred owls are some-

times active during daylight.

Eastern Screech Owl

Otus asio - 8.5"

This little owl comes in two shades - a russet red and a gray phase. It lives in Rhode Island year-round, in open woods, parks and



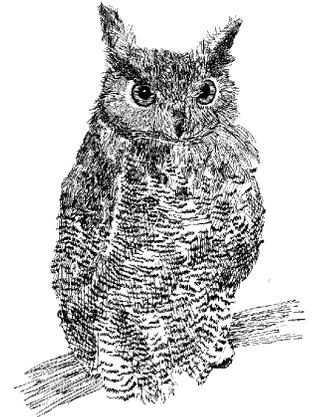
suburbs. Its call is a sad, wavering, descending wail, or a gentle rapidly-repeated series of flute-like notes or barks.

Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

22"

Our largest native owl, the Great Horned Owl favors wooded areas where it can hunt larger prey such as rabbits and skunks. It has even been seen in Swan Point Cemetery. You can recognize its call as a series of 3-6 deep, resonant hoots.



Long-eared Owl - *Asio otus* - 15"

An uncommon visitor to the Rhode Island area, this owl likes coniferous forests close to open country. The sound it makes is a soft, dove-like, 3-syllable hoot.

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Aegolius acadicus - 8"

This diminutive little owl, our smallest, is not a permanent resident, but migrates. It prefers coniferous forests. Its call is a low whistle, endlessly repeated, or a metallic whistle or chirp, similar to the filing of a saw.

