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Birds of the Rocky Mountains -- Paul A. Johnsgard

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***Birds of the Rocky Mountains*—Species Accounts, pages  
197–215: Doves and Owls**

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## Rock Dove (*Columba livia*)

**Identification:** This is the familiar barnyard pigeon, well known to everyone, living in the wild state. Wild-type rock doves rather resemble band-tailed pigeons, but lack yellowish bills and a white band, although the plumage patterns sometimes vary greatly. Rarely found far from humans, but at times living on cliffs or other natural sites.

**Status:** Present virtually throughout the region, although rare or lacking in high montane areas, and declining northwardly.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Largely associated with cities and farms in North America, and infrequent in forested areas. Buildings that provide narrow nesting ledges are preferred for nesting, but cliff ledges or crevices are sometimes also used.

**Seasonality:** Resident throughout the area, with a prolonged nesting season that probably extends over most of the year except perhaps in the most northerly areas.

**Comments:** This species is one of the avian "pests," sometimes causing serious health problems in areas where the birds are abundant and generally protected, as in most cities.

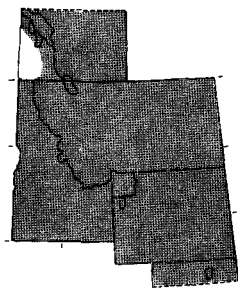
**Suggested Reading:** Goodwin, 1967; Murton & Clarke, 1968; Murton et al., 1972.

LATILONG STATUS

r	R	r	r
r	r	r	R
R	R	R	R

R	R	r	R
r	r	R	R
	r	R	R

R	r	R	R
R	R	r	R
R	R	R	R



## Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*)

**Identification:** This forest-dwelling pigeon has the general shape of a rock dove, but has a pale band across the posterior half of the tail, and a white crescent across the nape. The bill is yellow, with a black tip. The call is a double-noted cooing, repeated several times.

LATILONG STATUS

	V	V
V	V	V
	V	V

		M
	M	

		M
		M
S	S	S

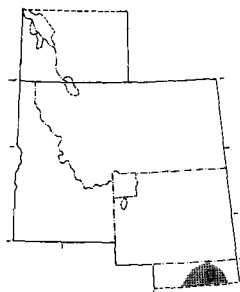
**Status:** Limited to the southernmost part of the region, breeding in Rocky Mountain N.P. and its vicinity, north to the Wyoming border. A vagrant farther north, rarely to Montana and southern Alberta.

**Habitats and Ecology:** This species is generally associated with western oak woodlands or mixed oak and pine woodlands, and extending into the ponderosa pine zone locally, especially where Gambel oaks are also present. Available foods in the form of acorns are an important determinant of local distributions. During July and August found up to 10,000 feet in Rocky Mountain N.P., gradually moving to lower altitudes in late summer.

**Seasonality:** In Colorado these birds are present from the end of March to late October, with a few birds sometimes wintering. The height of the nesting season is from late July to the first week in August, and nests with young have been seen from August 22 to 31.

**Comments:** Besides acorns, this species also feeds in summer on a variety of cultivated crops, gradually shifting in fall to a mixture of nuts, fruits, and berries. The birds are quite gregarious, and flocks often gather at salt deposits or sources of mineral water. At least in some parts of their range up to three broods (two eggs per clutch) may be reared.

**Suggested Reading:** Sanderson, 1977; Gutierrez et al., 1975; Neff, 1947; Houston, 1963.



## Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

**Identification:** This familiar dove is almost uniformly grayish brown, with a long, pointed, and white-edged tail. The bill is blackish, and there is a narrow bluish eye-ring. The call is a five-noted series, *who-ah, who, who, who*.

**Status:** A widespread and common breeder in the region, occupying nearly all vegetational zones up to the lower coniferous forest zone. Present and probably breeding in all of the montane parks.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Breeds from riparian woodlands and cultivated areas through grasslands and sagebrush to woodlands, aspen, and open coniferous forest habitats, as well as in cities and farmsteads. Nests either on the ground or, preferentially, in shrubs or trees.

**Seasonality:** Resident in Colorado and sometimes also in Wyoming, although there a migration peak in April and October is evident. In Alberta and Montana the birds usually arrive in mid-April and leave in October. The breeding season is prolonged; egg records in Colorado are from May 7 to August 12, in Wyoming from May 6 to September 4, and in Montana from early June to September 11, reflecting a nesting season of at least four months and repeated broods per pair.

**Comments:** Like other doves of the region, these birds lay only two eggs per cycle, but repeated nesting efforts result in high productivity. Both sexes help feed the young, initially providing them with "pigeon milk," a secretion of the crop lining. By late fall the adults and young are feeding on seeds of weeds, grain, berries, and the like.

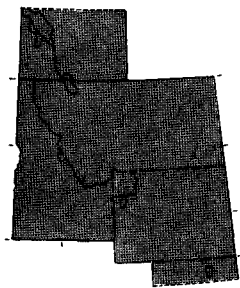
**Suggested Reading:** Sanderson, 1977; Nice, 1922; Cowan, 1952; Hanson & Kossack, 1963.

### LATILONG STATUS

s	R	s	s
s	S	s	S
S	S	S	S

R	S	S	S
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S
R	R	S	R



## Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*)

**Identification:** The two cuckoo species are similar in appearance, but this species lacks rusty coloration on the wings, has no yellow on the lower beak, and has less white on the tail. Its calls are fast cooing notes, in groups of three and four units.

### LATILONG STATUS

	?	M	?
	s		s
			s

s	s	s	S
M	V	M	S
	M		S

M	s	S	M
	M	M	M
		V	S

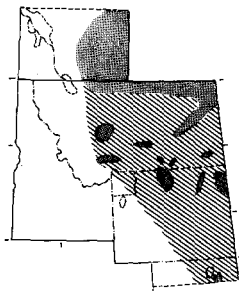
**Status:** A fairly common summer resident east of the mountains in plains woodlands; a rare vagrant in the montane parks. Breeds commonly on the plains of southern Alberta and northern Montana; local elsewhere.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Associated during the breeding season with somewhat dense woodland cover, such as upland woods with a variety of trees, shrubs, and vines, offering shady hiding places and nest sites.

**Seasonality:** Wyoming records are from May 21 to September 12, and Montana records extend from late May to early October. Nesting in Montana occurs in June, and in Colorado eggs have been seen as late as July 23. The birds leave soon after nesting, and even in Colorado the latest record is October 19.

**Comments:** Cuckoos are much more often heard than seen, as they skulk about in shady areas, acting in a generally secretive manner. Unlike the Old World cuckoo they are not obligatory nest parasites, although the two North American cuckoos sometimes drop their eggs in one another's nests in areas where both occur.

**Suggested Reading:** Spencer, 1943; Bent, 1940.



## Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*)

**Identification:** Similar to the preceding species, but with a bill that is yellowish below, and with rusty brown on the wings, and also a long tail that has large white tips on the outer features.

**Status:** A summer resident in the southern and eastern parts of the region, mainly east of the mountains, but breeding west locally at least to southern Idaho, and probably north to southeastern Montana. Rare at higher elevations, and absent from the montane parks.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Associated with thickety areas near water, second-growth woodlands, deserted farmlands, and brushy orchards. Dense woodlands are avoided.

**Seasonality:** Reported in Colorado from May 8 to September 22, with egg records from June 18 to August 15, and nestlings reported as late as September 10. The long nesting season suggests double-brooding is present, as is known to occur in some other areas.

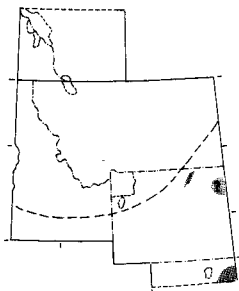
**Comments:** This species utters rather strange-sounding *kaw* or *kawp* notes, usually in long series, and sounding something like the noise made by pounding on a hollow wood drum. In some parts of their range the birds are called "rain crows," as they often call on dark and cloudy days, such as before rainstorms.

**Suggested Reading:** Poulter, 1980; Preble, 1957; Bent, 1940.

LATILONG STATUS


		M
M		M

s		M	M
			M
	V	s	S



## Flammulated Owl (*Otus flammeolus*)

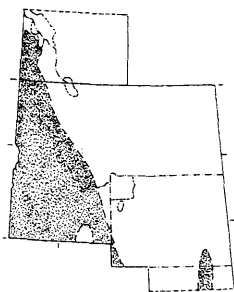
**Identification:** This small owl closely resembles a screech-owl, but has somewhat shorter "ears" and dark brown eyes, which are surrounded by rufous feathers. More easily recognized by its song, a cadenced series of *hoop* or *hoop-hoop* notes at intervals of three or four seconds.

### LATILONG STATUS

		V	
V	V		V

?			
	V		

			s



**Status:** Of uncertain extent in the region, probably more common and widespread than currently known, but known to breed in western Idaho, present during the breeding season in the River of No Return wilderness area of central Idaho, and also reported from Sawtooth and Caribou national forests. Breeds uncommonly in northern Utah, just beyond this book's coverage. At least until the early 1900s it bred in Rocky Mountain N.P., but there are no recent records for the species in the park.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Associated with aspen and ponderosa pine forests in both breeding and non-breeding periods, particularly ponderosa pine areas. In Colorado nesting up to 10,000 feet has been noted, usually in pines or aspens with woodpecker holes about ten to twenty feet above ground. Sometimes natural cavities are used.

**Seasonality:** A migratory owl, with Colorado records from April 16 to October 4. Egg records for that state are from May 27 to June 27, and mostly from June 5 to 20; nesting dates for Rocky Mountain N.P. are for mid-June.

**Comments:** This is a highly insectivorous little owl, often feeding on grasshoppers or beetles rather than vertebrate prey. Probably because of this, the species is quite migratory, usually wintering in Mexico or Central America.

**Suggested Reading:** Marshall, 1939; Winter, 1974; Richmore et al., 1980; Bergman, 1983.

## Western Screech-owl (*Otus kennicottii*)

**Identification:** Screech-owls are small, yellow-eyed owls with ear-tufts and (at least in the western species) a grayish overall plumage. The eastern species also occurs in a reddish brown phase. The western form is best identified by its call, a "bouncing ball" series of notes that begin slowly but speed up toward the end. The typical eastern song is a whinny-like series of rising and falling notes.

**Status:** The species limits are still uncertain, but at least in most montane areas of the region the western form is present, and from the Wyoming Bighorns east the eastern species is apparently the resident form. Both species appear to be present in northern Colorado and perhaps southern Wyoming, although past practices of classifying the two forms as a single species make range interpretation difficult. Screech owls probably breed in all of the montane parks south of Canada, but become rarer northwardly, and are apparently absent from the Alberta parks.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Associated with a variety of wooded habitats, including farmyards, cities, orchards, etc., and from riparian edges through pinon-juniper and oak-mahogany woodlands to aspens and ponderosa pine forests.

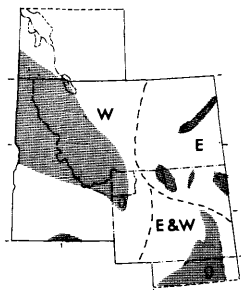
**Seasonality:** A resident in southern areas, usually a summer resident northwardly. In Colorado egg records (both species) are from April 7 to May 6, and nestlings seen as late as June 14. There are April egg records for Wyoming, and dependent young have been observed in Montana by early July.

**Comments:** Much more information from Wyoming and Colorado is needed before the status of the eastern screech-owl can be determined for these areas. Thus, no separate species account is provided for it here.

**Suggested Reading:** Marshall, 1967; Earhart & Johnson, 1970.

LATILONG STATUS

s	s	S	
	R	s	s
R	s	R	R
S	s		R
	R		M
	s		R
M		R	M
	M	R	
R	R	s	R





## Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

**Identification:** The largest of the "eared" owls of the region, and one of the commonest. Up to two feet long, with wingspreads of almost four feet, only the rare great gray owl is comparable in size, and it has a larger head that lacks ear-tufts. The usual call is a low hoot, *Who-who-ah-who, who-ah-who*.

### LATILONG STATUS

R	R	R	
	R	R	R
R	R	R	R

R	R	R	R
R	R	R	R
R	R	R	R

R	R	R	R
R	R	R	R
R	R	R	R

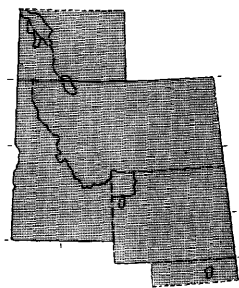
**Status:** A common resident in wooded habitats throughout the region; probably breeds in all the montane parks.

**Habitats and Ecology:** A powerful and adaptable owl, this species occurs everywhere from riparian woodlands through the coniferous forest zones, and extends into city parks, farm woodlots, and rocky canyons well away from trees. Nesting is thus highly variable, but often occurs in abandoned bird or squirrel nests, or on tree crotches, rock ledges, or even on the ground.

**Seasonality:** A permanent resident throughout the region, with Wyoming egg records from March 1 to May 23, and Montana records from mid-March to mid-April. Nestlings are usually evident in late May and June. Alberta egg records are from February 23 to May 29.

**Comments:** This is one of the most efficient avian predators in North America, taking a wide variety of mammalian and avian prey. They have been found to be serious predators on peregrine falcons that have been released in the Rocky Mountain region, and often take coots and ducks from the water at night.

**Suggested Reading:** Craighead & Craighead, 1956; Errington et al., 1940; Bent, 1938.



## Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*)

**Identification:** This is the only white or nearly white owl of the region, and it is about the same size as a great horned owl. Likely to be seen only in winter.

**Status:** A wintering migrant over most of the region, becoming rarer farther south. Rarely reported from the montane parks; usually found on open plains.

**Habitats and Ecology:** An arctic breeding species that periodically is forced south in winter when food supplies on the breeding grounds are limiting. The nearest breeding area is in extreme northern Manitoba, along the coast of Hudson Bay.

**Seasonality:** Present in Alberta from about mid-November to late March, and in Montana from late November to mid-February. Rare and irregular farther south in the region.

**Comments:** Snowy owls feed primarily on mice and other rodents while wintering in this region, and thus are beneficial birds. Unlike other owls, they often hunt during the day, using their ears to locate mice under the snow if necessary.

**Suggested Reading:** Taylor, 1974; Walker, 1974.

LATILONG STATUS

W	W	W	W
	W	W	W
W	W	W	W

W	W	W	W
	W		W
	W		W

		W	W
			W
	V	W	W



## Northern Hawk-owl (*Surnia ulula*)

**Identification:** A medium-sized grayish owl without ear-tufts, a long tail, and underparts barred with brown. Often active in daylight hours, perched on exposed areas, and sometimes pumping its tail.

### LATILONG STATUS

V	V	V	
V			
V	?		?
V	V		V
	?		

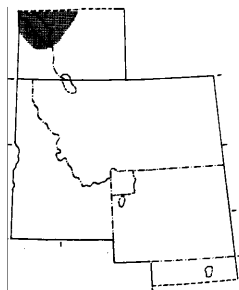
**Status:** A rare resident in the montane parks of Alberta; farther south a wintering vagrant.

**Habitats and Ecology:** This rare owl is most likely to be seen in burned over or open muskeg areas, where dry boggy areas offer excellent hunting, and tall trees or stumps provide look-out sites for the birds to perch while hunting. Hunting is done largely by visual means, in a hawk-like manner.

**Seasonality:** In central or southern Alberta these birds often appear in fall and establish wintering hunting territories. In Montana it has been reported from November to late February. It has been reported from three Wyoming latilongs, but not from Colorado. Alberta egg records are from April 1 to June 4, with a majority between April 13 and May 18.

**Comments:** This handsome and elusive owl also breeds in Eurasia in similar habitats, and has been better studied in that region.

**Suggested Reading:** Mikkola, 1983; Pulliainen, 1978.



## Northern Pygmy-owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*)

**Identification:** A tiny owl (about six inches long) with a relatively long tail and no ear-tufts. Its breast is streaked and its back spotted. A mellow, dove-like and three-noted hooting is distinctive, with the notes spaced one or two seconds apart. The notes are higher pitched than those of the saw-whet owl and are repeated more rapidly. Black nape patches, somewhat resembling false eyes, are visible from behind. Like the hawk owl, it sometimes nervously jerks or pumps its tail.

**Status:** An inconspicuous species that probably occurs through the montane forests south at least to Jackson Hole. Also breeds in the mountains of western Colorado, although apparently rare in Rocky Mountain N.P.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Found in similar habitats as saw-whet and flammulated owls, but apparently ranging higher, to about 12,000 feet in Colorado, and more active in daylight hours than these species. Nesting is done in woodpecker holes or similar tree cavities.

**Seasonality:** A resident over most or all of the region. Colorado egg records are from May 17 to June 22, and in Montana young have been observed in June.

**Comments:** Imitating this owl or playing its song on a tape recorder often provides a means of learning if it is in an area, as it is otherwise only rarely detected. A recording of the call will often also attract many small songbirds, attempting to "mob" the apparent unwelcome owl.

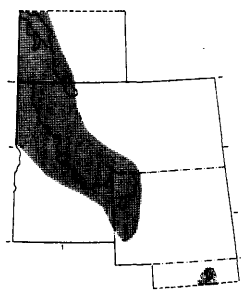
**Suggested Reading:** Earhart & Johnson, 1970; Walker, 1974.

LATILONG STATUS

r	R	r	
r	r	r	M
R	r	r	M

r	R		
	R	M	
	r		

M			
			R



## Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

**Identification:** Usually seen at or near colonies of prairie dogs or ground squirrels, whose vacant burrows the owls use for nesting. The owls are small, "earless," and rather long-legged, with pale spotting on the back. The call is a soft and dove-like *coo-cooo*.

### LATILONG STATUS

M	M		
	s		s
S	M		

s	s	s	S
s	M	s	S
	M	M	S

S	s	S	S
S	S	S	S
S		s	S

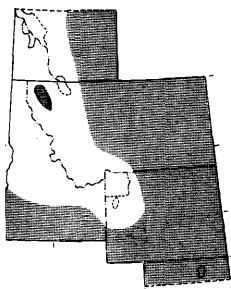
**Status:** A summer resident on the plains over much of the region; rare in most of the montane parks, and not proven to breed in any.

**Habitats and Ecology:** This is the only North American owl closely associated with plains rodents such as prairie dogs, and as the range and abundance of these mammals have decreased, so too has the status of the burrowing owl. It is largely an insectivorous species, often eating beetles, but also takes many small mice in some areas.

**Seasonality:** Wyoming records are from March 12 to November 2, with migration peaks in April–May, and again in September–October. In Montana the birds are present from mid-May to mid-September, and in Colorado most records extend from March 26 to November 4, with rare later occurrences. Colorado egg records are from May 9 to June 19, which encompasses available nesting records from farther north.

**Comments:** This attractive and interesting ground-dwelling owl is a member of the "high-plains" fauna that once included bison, prairie dogs, prairie wolves, and other animals that have now largely disappeared from the American scene. Large areas of grassland are needed to preserve these species, and few such areas still exist.

**Suggested Reading:** Coulombe, 1971; Thomsen, 1971; Martin, 1973; Grant, 1965.



## Barred Owl (*Strix varia*)

**Identification:** This rather large woodland owl is much more often heard than seen; its distinctive "Who cooks for you; who cooks for you-all" call is unmistakable after hearing it for the first time. If seen, the owl appears "earless," with a large rounded head and a heavily streaked and barred breast and belly. Its eyes are dark brown rather than yellow as in most owls.

**Status:** A relatively rare resident in the northern part of the region in wooded areas, especially along river bottom forests. Breeds south at least to Glacier Park, and probably occurs farther south along the mountains. There are few Alberta breeding records (*Canadian Field-Naturalist* 96:46-51).

**Habitats and Ecology:** Dense bottomland woods are this owl's favorite haunts, and it occurs in both coniferous and deciduous woods, possibly preferring the former. It often nests in tree cavities, but at times also uses old hawk or crow nests.

**Seasonality:** Resident where it occurs. Very few actual breeding records exist, but in Colorado eggs have been reported in March, and generally in the northern states it seems to breed in March and April.

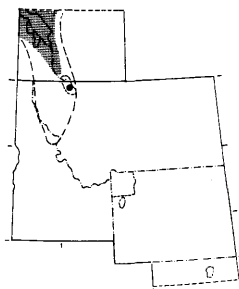
**Comments:** This beautiful owl is widespread in eastern and northern North America, and is replaced by the very similar spotted owl in the west and southwest. Both are strongly nocturnal, and not seen during the day unless they are disturbed from their forest roosting sites.

**Suggested Reading:** Dunstan & Sample, 1972; Bent, 1938.

LATILONG STATUS

s	s	s	
	s	S	M
S	M	s	M

M			?
	V		
	V		

Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

*Identification:* An enormous grayish owl, with a very large, “earless” head. Rarely seen, it perches near the trunk of tall trees during the day, remaining motionless and silent. However, it sometimes appears at the edges of clearings, perched on a tall branch that allows it to survey the clearing for mice or other small rodents. Its call is a series of deep hoots. Its white “mustache” and black “bow tie” markings are also distinctive.

LATILONG STATUS

M	S	S	
	M	M	
R	M	M	

R	s		?
M	R		
	R	M	

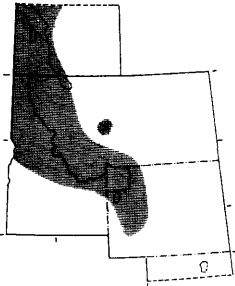

*Status:* A rare resident in the northern montane forest areas, south at least to the Wind River Range of Wyoming. Known to breed in several of the montane parks, but uncommon to rare in all.

*Habitats and Ecology:* In Alberta these birds usually nest in poplar woodlands, often near muskeg areas. Nests are usually in old hawk nests of various large species, from 10 to 80 feet above ground, in conifers or hardwood trees.

*Seasonality:* A permanent resident in some areas, but often moving in winter to regular winter feeding territories where mice and voles are abundant. There are few definite egg records for the region, but Alberta egg records are from March 22 to May 15, with a majority between April 9 and May 1.

*Comments:* This is one of the most beautiful and elusive of all North American owls; a single sighting provides a memory for a lifetime. The birds are superb at finding mice or voles in snowy areas, and crash down on them from above, with their talons outstretched, through the snowy cover.

*Suggested Reading:* Nero, 1980; Hoglund & Langren, 1968; Oeming, 1955; Brenton & Pittaway, 1971.



Great Gray Owl

## Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

**Identification:** This woodland owl is medium-sized, with long ear-tufts. It somewhat resembles a great horned owl, but is slimmer and smaller, and its calls consist of a variety of hooting notes. Perches during the day in shady tree roost sites, close to the trunk, where it is often overlooked.

**Status:** Resident over much of the region, except in Alberta, where relatively rare in montane areas, but known to have bred at Banff N.P. and a regular breeder in aspen parklands and prairie coulees.

**Habitats and Ecology:** A widespread species, often associated with coniferous or deciduous forests, but also found in woodlots, orchards, large wooded parks, and even sagebrush or pinyon-juniper woodlands during the breeding season.

**Seasonality:** Generally resident in the montane parks, but apparently migratory in the northernmost parts of its range in Alberta. Egg records in Colorado are from April 15 to May 16, and in Wyoming and Montana egg records are from April 15 to June 17. Nestlings have been seen in Wyoming in June, and fledged young in Montana in early July.

**Comments:** Like the short-eared owl, this is a highly nocturnal species that is usually not seen by the casual observer unless he happens to flush one from its roosting site. Evidently their food consists almost entirely of mice and similar small mammals; thus, like most owls they are highly beneficial for agricultural interests.

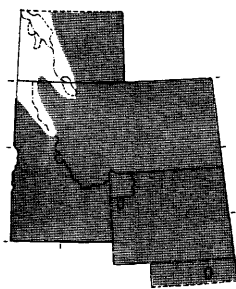
**Suggested Reading:** Randle & Austing, 1952; Marti, 1974; Armstrong, 1958; Glue, 1977.

### LATILONG STATUS

s	M	s	
	s		M
R	S	s	M

R	?	M	M
s	R	M	M
	R	M	M

M	R	r	M
r	R	M	R
R	R	r	R





## Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

**Identification:** This open-country owl is often seen coursing over grasslands, where its moth-like flight and blackish wrist-marks are easily observed. Perched on a fence post, it appears "earless" (short ear-tufts are actually present), and it has a whitish, streaked belly. Its calls are rarely uttered, but wing-clapping noises are made during aerial courtship.

### LATILONG STATUS

s	r	s	r
	R	M	S
V	S	r	s

r	s	M	R
s	R	M	M
S	R	M	R

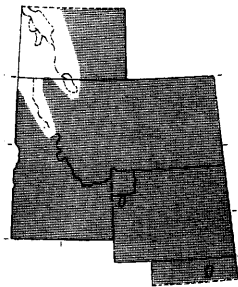
M		R	M
r	R	M	R
S		S	R

**Habitats and Ecology:** This is a prairie-adapted species, usually breeding in areas of grassland, marshes, arctic (but not alpine) tundra, and low brushland. Nests are usually on the ground, but sometimes in burrows. More diurnal than most owls, and often seen hunting in mid-day.

**Seasonality:** Migratory in northern parts of the region, although sometimes overwintering even in Alberta. Migration peaks in Wyoming are in late March and again in October. In Montana egg records extend from April 3 to June 13, and in Wyoming nestlings have been observed in mid-June. Alberta and Manitoba egg records are from May 5 to June 20.

**Comments:** The spring courtship displays of this species are spectacular; the birds perform looping flights above their territories, with diving, wing-clapping, and even somersaulting maneuvers being performed, accompanied by a quavering, chattering call. Nearly all of this species' prey consists of rodents, making it a valuable addition to the prairie fauna and worthy of protection by farmers, who often kill owls.

**Suggested Reading:** Murray, 1976; Banfield, 1947; Clark, 1975.



## Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*)

**Identification:** This small owl of the coniferous forests is "earless" and large-headed, with yellow eyes outlined by a grayish facial disk and a blackish crown spotted with snowflake-like dots. The chest is brownish, like a saw-whet's, but lacks distinct striping. Its usual call is a series of rapid hoots; bell-like tinkling calls have also been attributed to it.

**Status:** A rare to uncommon resident in Alberta's montane parks; local farther south and a rare breeder in Glacier N.P. Also nests locally in eastern Idaho (Condor 85:501) in the River of No Return wilderness area, in north-central Colorado (Cameron Pass area), and perhaps in the Jackson Hole and Togwotee Pass areas of Wyoming. Apparently a vagrant at Rocky Mountain N.P., with one park specimen record. However, it has been reported from Estes Park village (injured specimen), and has been heard calling at Bear Lake.

**Seasonality:** Virtually nothing is known of the status of this species regionally; a nest in east-central Idaho was found containing nestlings on June 2. The birds have also been found nesting in wood duck nesting boxes in Canada, but woodpecker holes are the more common site. Egg records from various localities in southern Canada are from April 11 to June 9.

**Comments:** One of the most attractive of all North American owls, and a very beneficial species, feeding on small mammals such as rodents up to the size of a squirrel, and rarely taking birds. In Europe this species is called the Tengmalm's owl.

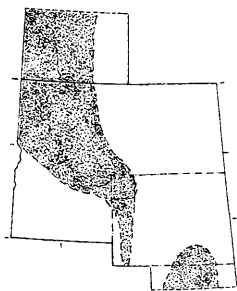
**Suggested Reading:** Mikkola, 1983; Lundberg, 1979; Catling, 1972.

### LATILONG STATUS

	W	S	
		W	
W			

V			
	V		
	r	V	

V			
		V	R



## Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*)

**Identification:** Similar in appearance to the preceding species, but smaller, and with a brownish rather than a grayish-black face and head, and without the "snowflake" crown pattern, which instead is streaked. The breast is also more distinctly streaked with rusty brown. The call is a long series of whoots or whistles, two or three per second, sounding something like the dripping of water or the tinkling of a bell.

### LATILONG STATUS

S	R	S	
	S	s	
R	M	M	M
R	r		M
s	R	M	M
	r	R	
R		M	r
	M	M	R
	R	s	S

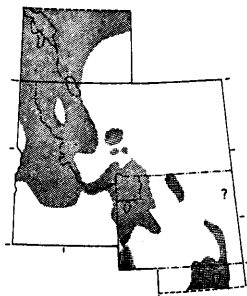
**Status:** Widespread permanent resident through the montane forests of the region, including the montane parks.

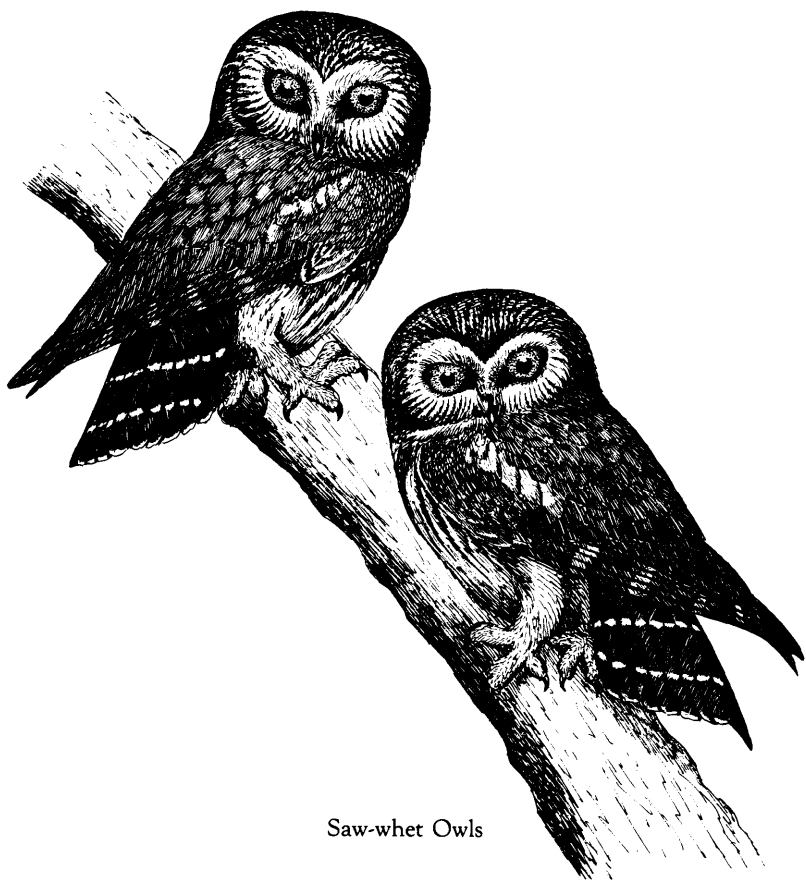
**Habitats and Ecology:** Occurs widely, from riparian woodlands through aspen groves to the coniferous forest zones, but not reaching timberline. The foothills and ponderosa pine zones are probably their favored habitats, where they nest in old woodpecker holes.

**Seasonality:** Probably a resident throughout the region. In Alberta eggs have been reported from April 18 to June 8, and in Colorado as early as April 15. The nesting season is quite prolonged; nestlings in Colorado have been seen as late as early July.

**Comments:** This tiny and attractive owl is a close relative of the boreal owl, but is more widespread and more southerly in its breeding distribution, the two species having more or less complementary distributions. Both are relatively tame when approached on roosting sites, and can be approached closely.

**Suggested Reading:** Mumford & Zusi, 1958; Forbes & Warner, 1974.





Saw-whet Owls