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## JANUARY: SNOWY OWL (*BUBO SCANDIACUS*)

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Few birds excite nature-lovers more than these magnificent white raptors from the north. Nesting across the Canadian tundra, varying numbers reach Wisconsin each year, where they take up residence in open habitats such as grasslands, wetlands, shorelines, and occasionally urban areas. While unusually large numbers have visited the state in four of the past five winters, the 2014 State of the Birds report listed them among 33 "Common Birds in Steep Decline," suggesting that more than half of their global population has been lost over the past four decades.

- The cause of this decline is poorly known but more likely related to changes on Arctic breeding grounds. Nonetheless, they do face threats here such as collisions with vehicles, electrocution, secondary rodenticide poisoning and illegal shooting. Mitigating these impacts while protecting and restoring grassland and wetland habitats will benefit snowy owls.
- Snowy owls have a varied diet, including small rodents, pigeons, rabbits, and a surprising number of ducks, gulls, and other waterbirds. Recent research through Project SNOWstorm has shown some owls commonly forage from ice floes in the Great Lakes or buoys miles offshore in the Atlantic Ocean!
- Although known for being diurnal, many are not day-active during the winter months, instead roosting by day and becoming active from dusk through dawn.

Find a snowy owl by checking low-level perches, such as the ground, fence posts, telephone poles, and small buildings, in open habitats from November through March. Get more tips and recommendations for respectful viewing at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/SnowyOwls.html>.