

# News Release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Service alerts public to abundance of snowy owls in upper Midwest this winter**

Snowy owls originating from the Arctic tundra are migrating south to winter in regions of the Great Lakes and Midwest plains, according to migratory bird biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The species' rare southerly migration may be the result of a decline in its forage base and a productive breeding season. The snowy owl migration began this October and the birds are expected to remain in portions of the United States until late winter/early spring.

Unlike many owls, snowy owls thrive in open grasslands, nest on the ground, and hunt mainly during the day. They feed on small mammals, waterfowl, birds and fish, and, their coloring, large size, unique hunting behavior and remote habitat distinguish them from other owl species.

“Since snowy owls tend to remain in the Arctic year-round, we are fortunate to have the opportunity to see them in the upper Midwest this winter. I encourage people to get outside and add seeing this owl in the wild to their life list,” said Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius. “However, as these birds tend to be in open areas and active during the day, please be aware and respectful so these Arctic visitors can return home in the spring.”

Although many adult snowy owls are thriving on their wintering grounds in the upper Midwest, younger birds appearing weak, thin or flightless may be emaciated from their long migration over the boreal forests of Canada. Members of the public that see a snowy owl in this condition should contact their local wildlife rehabilitator. A list of rehabilitators by state is available below:

Illinois - [http://www.dnr.state.il.us/law3/pdfs/rehab\\_permit.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/law3/pdfs/rehab_permit.pdf)

Indiana -

<http://www.entm.purdue.edu/wildlife/NWCO&REHAB.htm#INDIANA%20REHABILITATORS>

Iowa - <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/wildlife/RehabList>

Michigan - <http://www.michigandnr.com/dlr/>

Minnesota - [http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nongame/rehabilitation/rehabers\\_list.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nongame/rehabilitation/rehabers_list.pdf)

Ohio - <http://ohiodnr.com/wildlife/Home/resources/orphans/rehabilitators/tabid/6013/Default.aspx>

Wisconsin - <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/whealth/rehab/directory/>

If your state is not listed, contact your local state wildlife agency for more information.

Snowy owls are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Under the Act, taking, killing or possessing migratory birds is prohibited. Violation of this Act warrants arrest, jail time, penalties and fines under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov) .