

# Snowy Owl

Harfang des neiges

*Bubo scandiacus*



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Nordic species  
(rare visitor to southern Quebec)

Wingspan : M : 132 cm to 165cm / F : 157 cm to 182 cm



The Snowy Owl is stocky with white plumage sprinkled with dark brown spots. Its round head seems bereft of egress, but they are simply well camouflaged. The Snowy Owl has yellow eyes and its dense plumage covers it completely, from the beak to the tip of the toes, in order to better protect it from the cold.



The female is larger and more spotted than the male.

The Snowy Owl frequents tundra, open fields, moorland, low sparse vegetation, valley floors, and salt and poorly drained fresh water meadows. It is possible to see this owl in the south of Quebec during the wintertime.

It feeds primarily on lemmings and voles, but also on a variety of other prey such as hares, rats, ducks, pigeons, and even fish. The Snowy Owl is typically a diurnal species.

The owl lives on average ten years in the wild. The record for longevity in nature is 17 years. In captivity, the Snowy Owl can live 25 to 28 years.

The nest is built right on the ground, on a mound that allows the bird to monitor its surroundings. The nest is often a simple depression covered with feather, moss or grass. A clutch averages 5 to 9 eggs, but can range from 3 to 14 eggs.

The young owls make their first flight around 50 to 60 days of age. After the 60th day, the young are capable to hunting alone. They remain dependant upon their parents 5 to 7 weeks after leaving the nest.

The Snowy Owl's distribution is located far from human activity. Its density varies according to prey availability. Many young owls die of starvation during their first winter.

This large owl is the emblematic bird of Québec. It tolerates very well our harsh winter temperatures since its thick plumage and feathered feet allow it to survive in the extreme colds which can reach  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ .