

Snyder's Great Horned Owl



Jean Iron and Erwin Meissner

Snyder's Great Horned Owl is a proposed pale subspecies that breeds in northern Ontario. In April 2006 on the annual OFO trip to Manitoulin Island we saw a pale adult Great Horned Owl on a nest in a Bur Oak. Soon after our visit, the eggs hatched and two pale young were in the nest. On 22 May 2006, Erwin Meissner of North Bay took this photo of the one remaining young showing its pale coloration.

The Snyder's race was described in 1961 by L.L. Snyder, curator of birds at the Royal Ontario Museum, who named the breeding population in northern Ontario as *Bubo virginianus scalariventris*. The name *scalariventris* means scaly or barred below. It is regarded as part of the whitish subspecies *subarcticus* occupying the Ontario portion of latter's range. However, it differs enough that most individuals can be recognized from typical *subarcticus*. Snyder's race is recognized by James (1991).

Pittaway (1993) said the large and uniform series from across northern Ontario of *scalariventris* in the Royal Ontario Museum supports its recognition as a valid subspecies. Classic individuals of *scalariventris* are distinguished from nominate *virginianus* by their distinctive grey coloration and general absence of rufous in the plumage. The facial discs are pale grey, sometimes with a tinge of rufous. From *subarcticus* which is more buffy white and less barred below, Snyder's is distinguished by its darker cold grey coloration with broader, more regular and darker bars ventrally (Snyder 1961). In winter it wanders rarely to southern Ontario. Snyder's is usually much tamer than typical southern birds.

Literature Cited

- James, R.D. 1991. Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ontario. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.
- Pittaway, R. 1993. Recognizable Forms: Subspecies of the Great Horned Owl. *Ontario Birds* 11(2): 64-68.
- Snyder, L.L. 1991. On an Unnamed Population of the Great Horned Owl. *Contribution No. 54. 1961. The Royal Ontario Museum.*

Future 2006 OFO Field Trips

Dave Milsom, Trips Coordinator

Phone: 905-857-2235

Email: milsomdave@hotmail.com

Check trip details on OFO website: www.ofo.ca

November 4 (Saturday) Grand Bend, Pinery Provincial Park, Kettle Point and Point Edward (north winds). Leaders: Maris Apse. Meet 8:30 a.m. in Grand Bend at new Sobeys parking lot on north side of Huron County Road 81 east of traffic lights at Hwy 21. From points east take Hwy 401 westbound to Hwy 402 at Exit 183. Continue Hwy 402 to Exit 81, Centre Road, and proceed north on Middlesex County Road 81 via Parkhill (after jogging left at Middlesex County Road 7). Continue on Middlesex/Huron County Road 81 to Grand Bend (about 3 hrs. from Toronto). Check map for more direct routes or from other starting points. Late fall/early winter migrants: waterfowl, gulls, jaegers, eagles, owls, passerines and resident Tufted Titmouse.

December 3 (Sunday) Niagara River Gull Watch. Leaders: Jean Iron and Ron Tozer. Meet 9:00 a.m. at Adam Beck Lookout. Check OFO website for latest directions due to construction and road closures: NEW directions: Exit QEW at Glendale Avenue overpass and follow signs to Niagara-on-the-Lake taking York Road (just past Wendy's/Tim Hortons) northeast through St. Davids to where it meets Niagara Parkway at Queenston. York Road parallels Highway 405, ending at bottom of Queenston Heights near road to Queenston boat launch. Turn right and go up hill. At Brock Monument turn left, pass flowering clock, and proceed to Adam Beck lookout.

December 10 (Sunday) Toronto Lakeshore. Leader: Dave Milsom. Meet 9 a.m. at Humber Bay Park East parking lot. Off QEW, coming from west, take exit to Park Lawn. Turn right (south). Cross Lakeshore, then turn right to parking area. Off QEW, coming from east, exit at Lakeshore. Turn right onto Lakeshore, then left at lights into Humber Bay Park East. Winter species: ducks, gulls, waterbirds, finches, raptors.

January 1 (Monday) Peterborough and Area Leader: Dave Milsom, Gerry Ball. Meet 8:30 a.m. at Peterborough Zoo parking area. From Peterborough, go north on County Road 28 towards Trent University. Bald Eagle, Common Raven, winter finches, possible Bohemian Waxwings.

January 28 (Sunday) Ottawa Area [until noon] Leader: Tony Beck. Meet 8:00 a.m. at the Coliseum Theatre Parking Lot, northwest corner, 3090 Carling Ave. east of Bayshore. Explore Ottawa's west end for special winter birds like Snowy Owl, Pine Grosbeak, Iceland Gull, Northern Shrike, Gray Partridge and other interesting birds. Each winter is different. Our route will maximize chances of finding the most interesting birds. Trip ends at noon.

February 3 (Saturday) Fisherville Area, Haldimand-Norfolk County. Leader: John Miles. Meet 9 a.m. in parking lot of high school in north end of Cayuga on County Road 54. Hawks, owls, Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, sparrows.