Delaware County Bird Club
NEWSLETTER

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Wings over the Dakotas



Steve Landes & Tania Perry

Birds of the prairies, potholes, and Badlands

A small group of central Ohio birders rented a van and took an 8 day driving tour to the northern Dakotas. This is our story from two different perspectives- a serious lister and a casual nature lover.

Speakers: Steve Landes & Tania Perry

Steve Landes is a long time nature lover who has been birding since he was 11 years old. Now a data analyst for a major healthcare company, he focuses mainly on birding in Delaware county.

Tania Perry has been a resident of Ohio for her whole life, growing up in Tuscarawas County and then Highland County. She has lived in Delaware since 1984 after graduating from Rio Grande College with a nurs-

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DELAWARE COUNTY BIRD CLUB PROGRAMS

The Delaware County Bird Club in-person meetings and program presentations have resumed. They take place on the fourth Monday of each month, September through April, except in November and December when they are held on alternate days to accommodate the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Meetings are held in the lodge at Deer Haven Park at 4183 Liberty Road, Delaware Ohio, 43015. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., programs begin at 7 p.m., and are followed by reports of local bird sightings and socializing. Meeting dates can also be found on the Preservation Parks of Delaware County calendar at this link: https://preservationparks.recdesk.com/Community/Calendar

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100 Years Ago in The Auk: Snowy Owls in 1926-1927

Richard Bradley

Since 1884 The Auk: A Quarterly Journal of Ornithology has been the premier scientific journal in North American bird research. I found this article in the October, 1927 issue (Vol. XLIV No.4). It describes an extraordinary "invasion" of Snowy Owls (Bubo scandiacus) during the winter of 1826-1827. The following is a summary of an article entitled "The Snowy Owl Migration of 1926-1927 was written by Alfred O. Gross.

Gross begins by explaining the regular movements of Snowy Owls south from their arctic breeding range south into southern Canada, and sometimes northeastern United States. He lists the "most notable flights during the past fifty years" as "1876-77, 1882-83, 1889-90, 1896-97, 1901-02, 1905-06, 1917-18" and the subject of this article 1926-27.

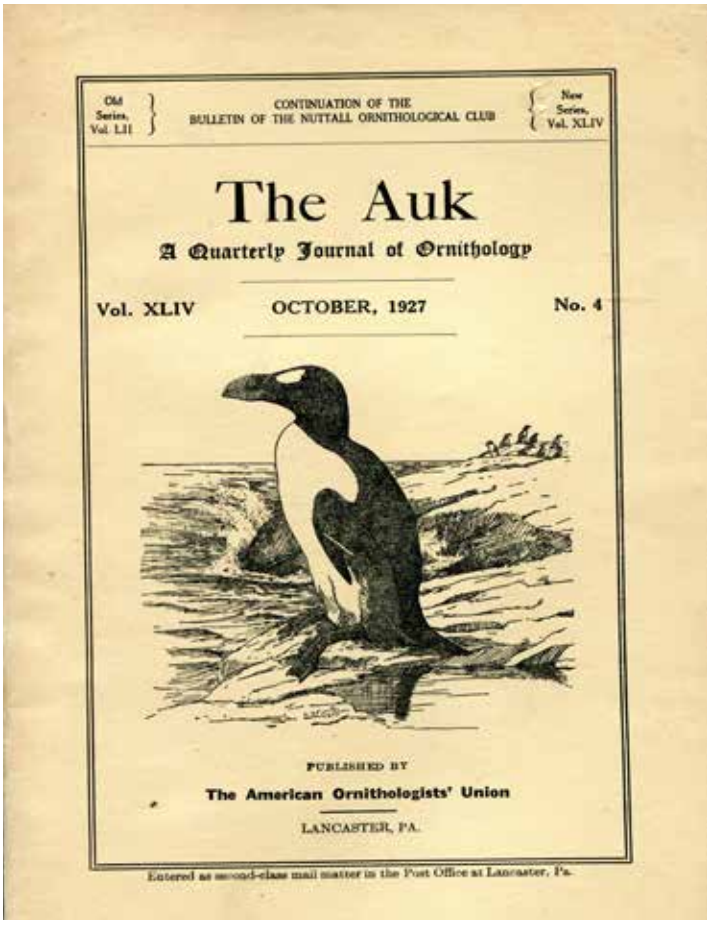
He states that a few Snowy Owls find their way into the United States almost every year, but only occasionally do large numbers venture down here. The most probable explanation is the fluctuations in their prey animals (hares, rabbits and lemmings) in the arctic. When these prey numbers drop up there, the owls travel south in search of food.

Because these capable predators take many birds, including game species, early in the 1926 invasion a committee was formed to collect information concerning their abundance and distribution. The members being concerned about depredations of game species by the owls. Reports were received from newspaper clippings and other sources, including light house stations, taxidermists, and ornithologists.

I was impressed with this quotation from the introductory portion of the report;

"The one regrettable thing concerning this migra tion is the reception the birds received. The number of these beautiful and interesting birds which were killed is appalling. They came at a time when there was a maximum number of gunners in the field and every Owl that appeared seemed to be an invitation to shoot. There are few hunters in the far north and hence the Owls especially the young birds which were in the majority, had but little fear of man. Their habit of feeding in the open also made them conspicuous and easy targets. Many hunters killed them thinking it their duty to protect the game birds but too often the Owls were killed

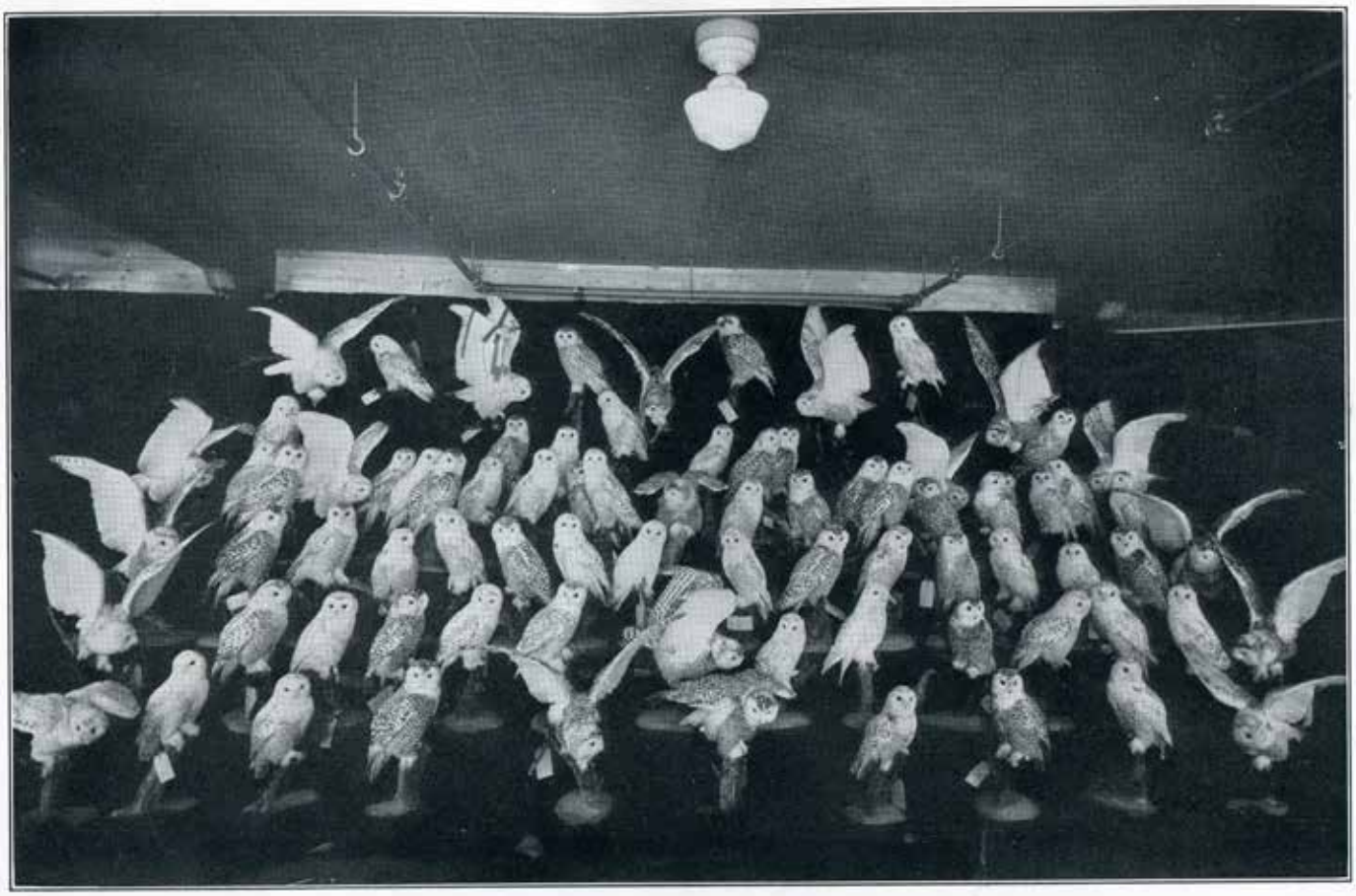
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Gross, Alfred O. 1927. The Snowy Owl Migration of 1926-27. The Auk, v 44 (4), 479-493.

A tally of the official reports of Snowy Owls provided to the committee

State	
Michigan	592
Maine	589
New York	495
Massachusetts	294
Pennsylvania	256
Ohio	194
Minnesota	103
Rhode Island	96
Connecticut	58
New Jersey	15
Maryland	12
Virginia	9
New Hampshire	8
Vermont	5
Iowa	3
Woisconsin	3
Indiana	2
North Dakota	1
Illinois	1
West Virginia	1
Total reports	2737



Eighty-one Mounted Snowy Owls in the Taxidermy Shop of Fred C. N. Parke, Bangor, Maine, which Are only a Part of Those Received During the Flight of 1926–27.

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merely to satisfy a desire to kill or a curiosity to examine the strange bird at close range. A large number of the Owls were thrown aside and wasted and of course were never reported. From estimates made of conditions in Maine and from reports received from elsewhere I feel that 5,000 is a conservative estimate of the number of Snowy Owls killed in the United States and Canada during the 1926-27 flight."

The article continues with a tally of the official reports of Snowy Owls provided to the committee. These are verified reports, as the author states, they represent only a fraction of the actual numbers that came down from the arctic.

Among the many interesting observations that Gross includes in his report are the results of examination of the stomach contents of birds prepared for taxidermy. These summaries are based only on the 94 owls examined by Angell and Cash taxidermists of Providence, Rhode Island. There were 55 with empty stomachs, 24 contained rats, 3 squirrels, 7 wild native birds, 1 poultry, and 4 with miscellaneous food. Another

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Photo by A. O. Gross

Captive Snowy Owls—November 21, 1926.

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ing degree. She worked at Grant Medical Center for twenty-five years, primarily in Trauma and cardiac critical care. She always had a passion for nature and the outdoors. Tania and Corey live on Maynard Road, which many people associate with the Calliope Hummingbird that was at their home for three months in 2017. She has made many lifelong friends in the birding community, including Steve Landes, Corinna Honscheid, Bryan Sharp, and others; think Chicken Run 2019! Tania is passionate about volunteering with Preservation Parks, helping with the Delaware County Christmas Bird Count, yearly monitoring of the Purple Martin tower at Deer Haven Preserve, and helping with the Tree Swallow monitoring on Panhandle Road.

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report from Bowdoin College indicated that the owls fed "very largely" on rats and other rodents.

Here is another interesting quote about game keepers actions;

"The Owls played havoc with Black Ducks and killed many Pheasants on No Mans Land, Mass. The keeper, Mr. R.W. Wood shot 38 and captured nine alive during the first week after the Owls appeared." These reports remind us that it used to be common practice to kill predatory birds, which at the time were not protected species. The earliest Snowy Owl reports were from October 1926, the peak occurred on November 16, and the numbers fell until there were only a few in March and April of 1927.

In addition to the remarkable numbers on land, there were also reports of Snowy Owls that were wandering over the ocean taking advantage of passing ships. Many stayed there and hunted rats. One report published in the 'Evening News' relates this story from the S. S. American Trader tells of an owl that flew aboard 150 miles off the Atlantic coast. Gross writes;

"...this Owl was a victor in a desperate fight with the ship's cat. The photograph shows the cat well bandaged and with a very dejected appearance, whereas the Owl sits erect on his perch above the victim in a triumphant haughty attitude."

A few of these seafaring owls were transported to England and Scotland. One of the Snowy Owls settled on the S.S. Carinvalona at a point 600 miles off the Scottish coast. Some, more fortunate Owls landed aboard ships heading west and were returned to land in New York.

Can you identify this?



This photo was taken at Delaware Wildlife Area on 5 November 2020
Last month's photo was a Song Sparrow (facing away)

Christmas Bird Count early notice

A "heads up" for those who participate in the Christmas Bird Count. Our count (OHDR) is set for Sunday 20 December 2026. The date for out count is the first Sunday of the count period (December 14 to January 5). Since the 14th is a Monday this year, the first Sunday is the 20th. The CBC pre-count bird club meeting will be on the evening of Monday the 14th.

