

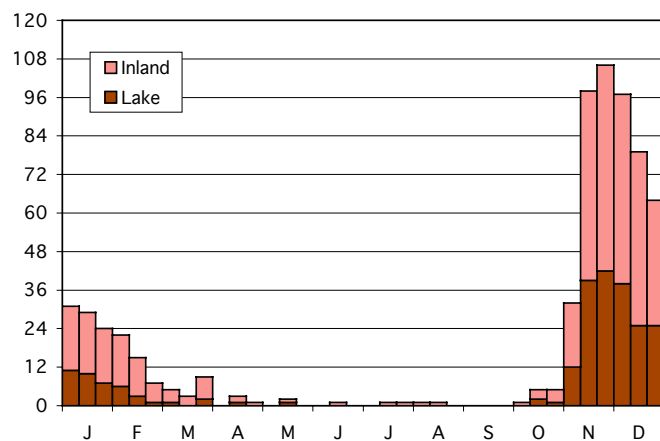
## Snowy Owl

## *Bubo scandiacus*

### Historical Information

**First Published Record:** Butler (1898) mentioned a Snowy Owl specimen from Franklin County that was taken in December 1879, but the earliest fully dated report involved a bird at Michigan City 21 December 1883 (Butler 1898).

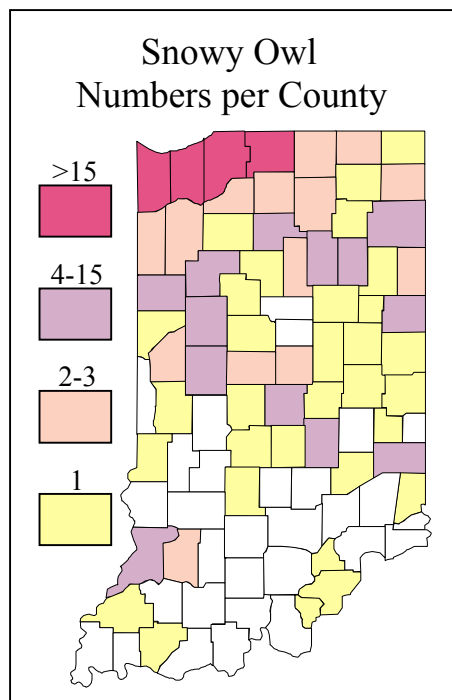
Butler (1898) described the Snowy Owl as a winter visitor of irregular occurrence, usually rare but occasionally numerous. Keller et al. (1979) considered it a casual to very rare winter visitant. Mumford and Keller (1984) suggested that the Snowy Owl was considerably more rare than in Butler's era.



### Status

**Physical Evidence:** At least two specimens are known to exist in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Field Museum				1
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	6	10	10	7
Central Tier	9	n	10	10
Southern Tier	9	10	n	10
Entire State	6	10	10	7



### Current Status

In northwestern

Indiana, the Snowy Owl is Uncommon (6) in winter and Rare (7) in fall. It is Occasional (9) or Accidental (10) at other times and locations.

### Occurrence

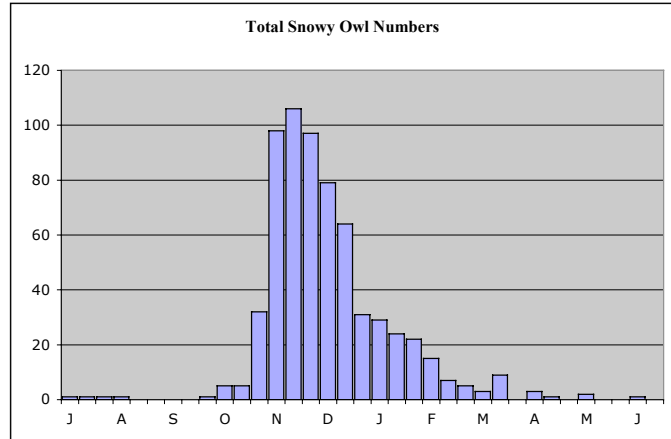
The largest numbers appear on the lakefront where this northern owl often frequents the breakwaters. During the interval 1949 to 1982, Mumford and Keller (1984) reported Indiana records for every year except 1952. Subsequently, there were no published reports in 1995 or 2003. An average of 8.6 birds was recorded annually over the past 20 years with a maximum of 34 in 1996. It has been reported in at least 62 counties. An interesting study by Dancey (1983) revealed that the diet of one lakefront bird included such unlikely items as Black Scoter and Northern Saw-whet Owl.

## Migration

As shown in the migration histogram the major influx of Snowy Owls occurs in November. It is interesting that this strong fall flight is quite distinctive on the migration histogram; however, there is no evidence of a corresponding return flight in spring. This is illustrated more clearly in the July to June plot shown on the right.



Snowy Owl in rural White County 31 July 2004. This individual was present from mid-July until 15 August, when it was hit by a vehicle. Photo by J.K. Cassady.



## Summer Records

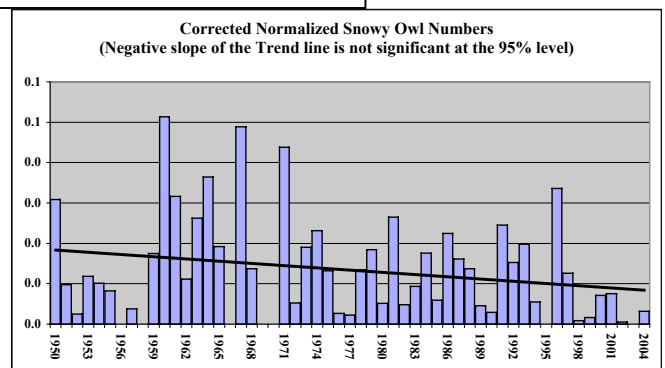
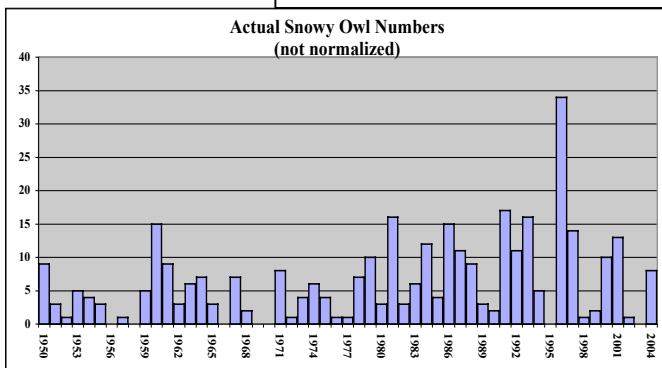
The July – August records shown on the migration histogram, reflect an apparent adult male that was discovered in Tippecanoe County by Ben Vineyard on 15 July 2004 (though some reports suggested it had been present for two or three weeks). The owl then relocated to White County where it remained until 15 August when it was hit by a motor vehicle (Dunning 2005). The only other summer record (12 June 1997) involved an injured bird (Gorney, pers. comm.).

## Population Trend

Snowy Owl numbers have decreased in recent years. However, the relatively strong negative slope of the 50-year trend line is not statistically significant at the 95 percent level.

### Snowy Owl Population Trend

Negative slope of the trend line is not significant at the 95% level



### Snowy Owl Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Entire Year				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
6	15-Dec-1905	Franklin Co	???	BU5
5	30-Nov-1996	Lakefront	S.R. Bagby	KJB
3	28-Nov-1991	Lakefront	K.J. Brock	KJB
3	16-Nov-1996	Lakefront	J.J. McCoy	KJB
3	07-Dec-1996	Lakefront	Clyde Fields	KJB
3	18-Nov-2000	Mich. City Harb.	J.K. Cassady	KJB

Migration Envelopes						
Entire state						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
Winter	8-Oct-1965	12-Nov	Win. Res.	25-Mar	15-May-1950	379

### References Cited

Butler, A. W. (1898) The Birds of Indiana, Indiana Department of Geology and Natural Resources Annual Report, 22:575-1187.

Dancey, H.E. (1983) Winter Foraging Habits of A Snowy Owl, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 61:136-144

Dunning, J.B., Jr. (2005) Snowy Owl in White County, July-August 2004, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 83:105-110.

Keller, C.E., S.A. Keller, and T.C. Keller (1979) *Indiana Birds and Their Haunts*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 214 pp.

Mumford, R.E. and C.E. Keller (1984) *The Birds of Indiana*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 376 pp.

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