

Arctic Great Horned Owl at Jackson Park, Cook County

by Paul R. Clyne

I discovered a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) showing characters typical of the arctic subspecies *subarcticus* on Wooded Island in Jackson Park, Chicago, on 6 December 1998. This individual remained through 10 December, during which time many birders observed it. Thomas Jackman obtained a nice series of photographs documenting the frosty brown-gray plumage of the bird from both above and below.

Bohlen (1989:101) cites six previous records of this subspecies for Illinois—two specimens from the last century, plus four more recent sight records, “which may be difficult to confirm,” from the years 1973–1984. Five of these are from Cook County, while the sixth is from Bureau County. Details on the sight records are unpublished, but a photograph of a wintering individual appears in *Illinois Audubon Bulletin* 205:47; this is the 30 January 1983 record included in Bohlen (1989). The photo caption indicates that this bird was present from at least 18 December 1982. In the Illinois journals published since Bohlen’s monograph, I find but one additional record—an apparently undocumented report of a “pale arctic form” at Montrose Cemetery, Chicago, 20 and 27 December 1992 (*Meadowlark* 2:114). Although Bohlen (1989) does not indicate that his list of records is comprehensive, I find no other prior reports; e.g., Ford (1956) mentions only one of the old specimens, and Bohlen (1978) supplies no further evidence. Mlodinow (1984) expressly limits the number of Chicago area records (including nearby areas of Wiscon-



sin, Michigan, and Indiana) to three—all from Illinois; he excludes, without comment, two Chicago-area records included in Bohlen (1989). The Jackson Park bird seems to raise the total number of records of apparent *subarcticus* for Illinois to no more than eight. The rarity of this form outside Canada is further underlined by Wisconsin data cited in Robbins 1991; while “several” pale birds were seen during the remarkable winter invasion of 1932–33, there are but five reports from other years.



Arctic Great Horned Owl at Wooded Island, Jackson Park, Cook Co. Photos taken 7 December 1998 by Thomas Jackman.

Literature Cited

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Meadowlark