

1996/1997 (Johnson & Biss 1997) when most Snowy Owls were noted along Lake Michigan's lakefront this irruption was far and widespread into the interior of Illinois with individuals detected southwest to Randolph County, west to Quincy and along the Mississippi River, as far southeast as Edwards County, and as far south as Pulaski County.

### Methodology

The same general methodology was used for obtaining and screening Snowy Owl observational data points as in this journal's 1997 report (Johnson and Biss). However, during this irruption many more tools were available including on-line Ebird reports, IBET (Illinois Birders Exchanging Thoughts) sightings, IBF (Illinois Birder's Forum) on-line CBC (Christmas Bird Count) data for obtaining data points for the Snowy Owl sightings acknowledged. Several hundred photographs were reviewed/

used in separating out individual sightings at Montrose, other Chicago lakefront locations, and elsewhere. IBET and IBF often provided links to photographer's websites to determine whether or not to count a new Snowy Owl record. As a caveat, however, it was nearly impossible to separate out individuals that might have been seen at a different location from each other particularly those reports in close proximity. Thus the number of Snowy Owls reported may have been the same individuals at different locations, but I suspect that far more owls went undetected particularly inland away from large population centers.

For the historical record of distribution of Snowy Owls by counties in Illinois, the author reviewed nearly all Illinois Audubon bulletins (beginning with a 1916 bulletin), all Illinois Birds and Birding issues, and Meadowlark, a Journal of Illinois Birds issues to date (Figure 2).

Any errors of omission are the author's and, as always, updates are welcome to make the record more accurate and complete.

### Significant records

The southernmost record ever for Illinois occurred during this irruption in Pulaski County 27 January – 5 February 2012 on Shawnee College Road (Rhonda Rothrock in lit.). The most southwestern record was just east of Red Bud, Randolph County from 26 January through 21 February 2012 (Susan Harbaugh in lit.). The most western record was at the Quincy airport from 15-17 January 2012 (Kara L. Knuffman fide Steve Bailey). The most southeastern sighting was in Edwards County near Bone Gap on 11 December 2011 (Bob Shelby in lit.). The first ever Spring Bird Count record for Snowy Owl also occurred when Pete Olson (in lit.) and other observers photographed a Snowy Owl near Crego Road in

Figure 1: Snowy Owl distribution (Winter 2011/2012)

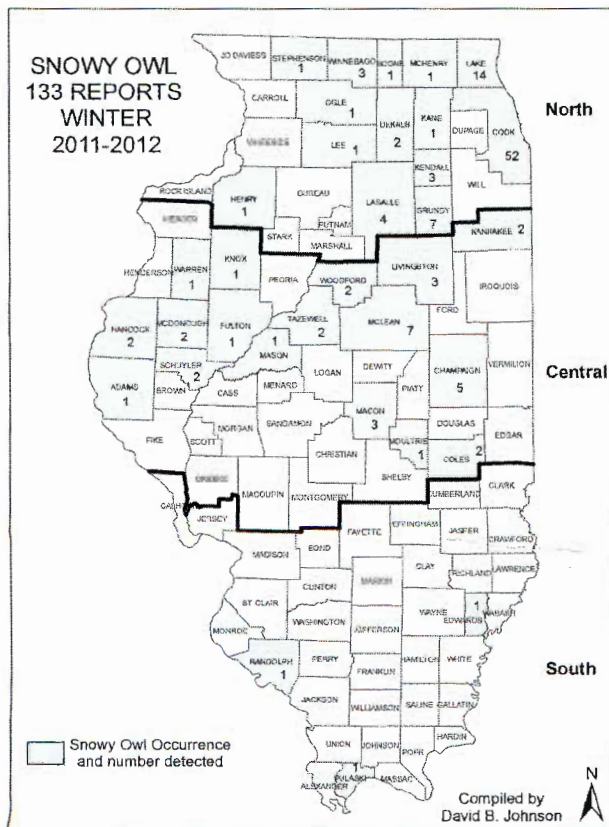


Figure 2: Snowy Owl distribution (historical occurrences)

