

Owls chasing and killing a Peregrine and being killed by a Peregrine.

Another photographic encounter with a bird of prey occurred when a Northern Harrier was observed and photographed harassing a Snowy Owl on the ground in central Illinois, see photograph.

### **Historical detection distribution map by counties in Illinois**

Snowy Owls have occurred historically in 73 counties in Illinois (Figure 2.) Nearly all the distribution has been in the top two-thirds of the state. Only one county in northern Illinois has not recorded a Snowy Owl; that is Putnam County. In central Illinois, six counties have not recorded a Snowy Owl: Cass, Scott, Greene, Macoupin, Shelby and Edgar, nearly all in the bottom tier of central Illinois. In southern Illinois, 22 counties have never recorded a Snowy Owl and distribution has been splotchy with Wabash County being the southeasternmost, Randolph County the south-westernmost, and Union and Pulaski counties being the southernmost counties with records.

### **Historical irruptions in Illinois**

According to Bohlen (1989) known irruptions of Snowy Owls have occurred during the years of 1876-77, 1882-83, 1889-90, 1892-93, 1896-97, 1901-02, 1905-06, 1909-10, 1917-18, 1926-27, 1930-31, 1949-50, 1974-75, 1976-77, 1978-79, 1980-81, 1991-92 (Johnson 1992), 1996-97 (Johnson 1997), and 2011-12. Bohlen (1989) also lists other possible irruptions during the years of 1967-68 and 1987-88. Angelo Capparella (pers. comm.) suggests that there may have been another invasion year in Illinois during 1867-1868 based on a mount specimen from Lee Co. (ISU specimen #234).

### **Other Midwest state's irruptions**

Additionally many Midwest states achieved record Snowy Owl irruptions during the period 2011/2012.

Indiana tallied a record 50 Snowy Owls from 18 November 2011 through 12 May 2012 (Ken Brock in lit.). Nebraska had reports of 200 sightings with at least 159 of those verified (David Heidt, Joel Jorgensen in lit.). Kansas had a record 160 observations and Missouri tallied approximately a record 60 sightings from 22 November 2011 through 6 March 2012 (Mark Robbins, Joshua Uffman in lit.). One observer in N. Dakota alone had 101 observations of Snowy Owls and there were at least 153 observations statewide from 10 November 2011 through 4 May 2012 (Corey Ellingson in lit.). There were 193 sightings in South Dakota from 1 November 2011 through 7 May 2012 (Jeffrey Palmer, Michael Melius in lit.). Michigan tallied approximately 200 sightings with the first arrival on 11 November 2011 in the Upper Peninsula (Skye Hass in lit.). Minnesota had 337 reports from 4 October 2011 through 8 July 2012 though many were duplicates and the final tally was estimated at 217 birds (Anthony Hertzell 2012). Like Minnesota, Wisconsin estimated their total to be between 150-200 individuals from 10 November 2011 through 7 June 2012 (Ryan Brady in lit.) and like Minnesota there was a problematic issue of distilling down of duplicate individuals from ebird and other listing sites. Iowa recorded 154 owls, their second largest documented irruption, from 7 November 2011 to 10 March 2012 (Stephen Dinsmore in lit.). Ohio recorded 23 owls from 28 November 2011 through 8 April 2012 (Craig Caldwell in lit.) and surprisingly just to the south of Illinois, Kentucky reported none (Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr. in lit.).

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