

are not unusual during Snowy Owl invasions, especially when birds are hungry," said Evans, the bander from Minnesota. Indeed, Evans had his own Snowy Owl story to relate, one perhaps even more amazing than the Waukegan hotel story.

While radio tracking a female Snowy Owl one winter, Evans picked up the location signal but could not visually locate her. Finally, 10 days later, he realized that she was trapped in a 100-foot high chimney. "The owl was probably chasing a pigeon at dusk and got caught inside the chimney," he theorized.

Evans dropped a live pigeon down the chimney so that the owl wouldn't starve. The next day after searching five compartments in the chimney, Evans located several dead pigeon carcasses, three live pigeons, a dead Snowy Owl, and finally his live radio-tagged female Snowy Owl at the bottom of the chimney.

"After I captured and released the female," recalled Evans, "she never went near that part of town for the remainder of that winter."

"Often snowies will follow prey into an open window or chimney even if it would be impossible for them to fly back out again. They get trapped and often perish," he said. Thus, it can be a bittersweet memory for Illinois birders to witness a Snowy Owl invasion, knowing the birds are there because food is scarce.

Still, Illinois birders will never forget the image of the 23-inch long, round-headed, yellow-eyed phantom of the north. I know I will never forget the day Richard Myslinski called me

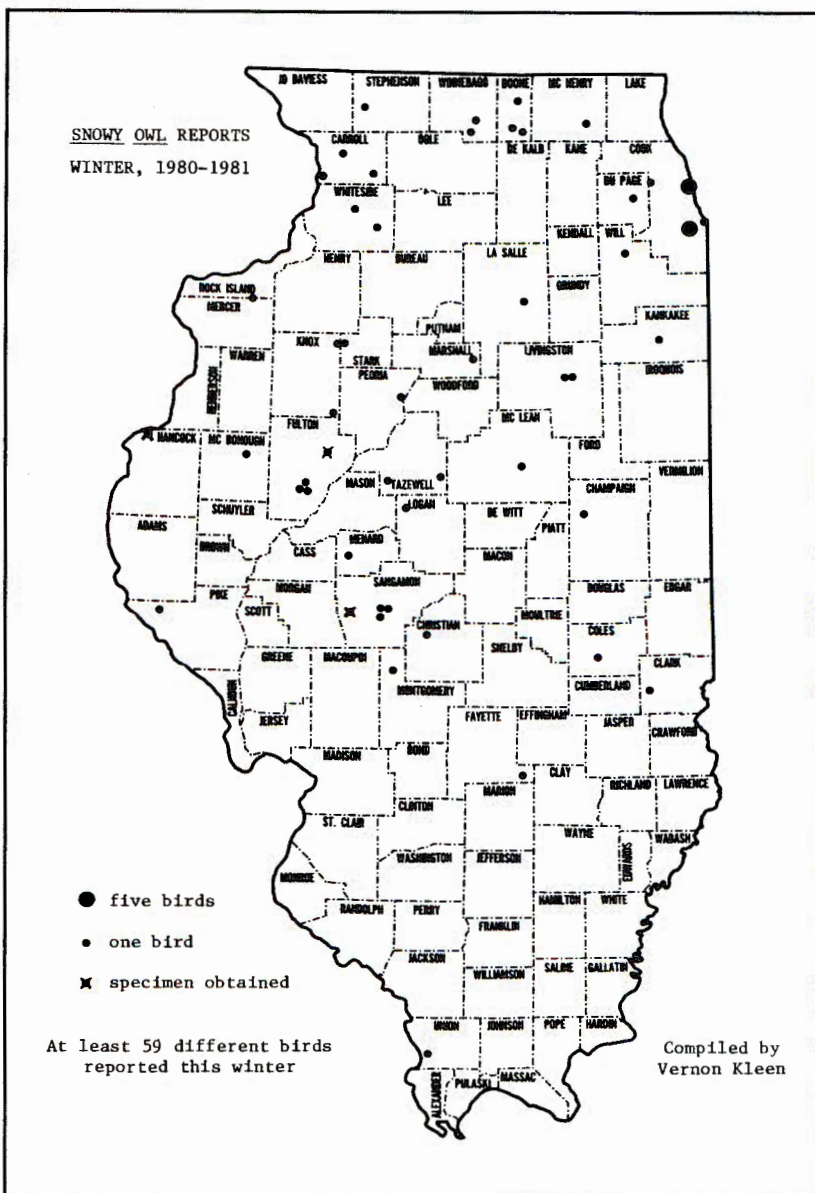


Figure 1. Snowy Owl invasion, winter, 1980-81. Map reprinted with permission from "Winter Season Field Notes," *Illinois Audubon Bulletin*, 1981. Compiled by Vernon M. Kleen.

while I was at work to tell me about a Snowy Owl he had seen nearby.

I rushed to the site, dragging others away from work who had never seen a Snowy Owl. There we stood watching this immense, beautiful bird. "I'm

amazed at how well the Snowy Owl's plumage blends in with the surrounding snow field," said Mike Ward of Lake Villa. "He seems so tame and motionless. He's just sitting there quietly so close to the road."

Beverly Ford of Chicago said,