



The Roost

NEWSLETTER OF THE OWL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (ORI) & THE NINEPIPES CENTER FOR WILDLIFE RESEARCH & EDUCATION (NCWRE)

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Message from the President

Greetings from Charlo, Montana. It's a beautiful morning here in the Mission Valley. The moon is full as it sets in the western sky, and the air crisp. It's been a cool, moist fall in western Montana, and the peaks of the Mission Mountains already have a blanket of snow. For the first time since I have written this newsletter from our research center (11 years), the Great Horned Owls are not hooting outside my office window or walking on the roof. I wonder where they could be. Anyway, after last year's three-page president's message, summing up our 20th year, I will keep this one brief.

The years seem to get busier as our interests grow, and more people and agencies want to work with us. We currently maintain seven major research projects, with a number of smaller studies umbrellaed within these. Three of our major projects have datasets covering 15-24 years of study. As these projects run on, newer ones are started. Thus we continually have long-term research goals.

We've decided to share a few more photographs and some technical graphs of our research data in this newsletter. We have chosen to present these because we are beginning to summarize, analyze, and write results from our longer-term datasets. For example, our breeding season data for Long-eared Owls (24 years) indicate a gradual downward trend for this grassland species in Montana. In contrast, our Snowy Owl breeding data (18 years) on the Arctic tundra in Barrow, Alaska, indicate a stable breeding population.

These two projects illustrate the importance of long-term research and monitoring to detect population trends over time. This is something short-term — less than five-season wildlife studies — cannot do.

Our continued monitoring of Northern Pygmy, Boreal, and Northern Saw-whet owls now covers over 15 years each. Our Northern Hawk and Barn owl studies are entering their fourth years, and our Short-eared Owl study finished its first year. We are confident we will achieve long-term datasets with these three new studies.



ORI President Denver Holt

It's been a year since Caroline Deppe came on as our Program Director. She is an outstanding addition to our team, incorporating simple, yet creative ways to convey our efforts. For example, Caroline determined that in 2009, we provided more than 50 educational opportunities, teaching more than 1,500 hours to just over 1,000 participants. Ultimately, the ORI donated more than \$50,000 to public service in 2009.

We have always engaged in citizen science through our "Day in the Field" program, where the public experiences field research firsthand. In 2009, we also developed an informal citizen science program, to help with Northern Hawk Owl research. It was a fortuitous relationship and one we hope to continue (see Northern Hawk Owl section page 5).

After 21 years of operation, the ORI has seen a few highs and lows in our economy, with the most recent perhaps the worst. During these times, however, our constituents have always provided the support to keep our programs going. We ask once a year, in this newsletter, for your contribution. We hope you will continue to donate.

Thanks and Happy Holidays – Denver Holt.

POST SCRIPT: On a sad note, I lost two friends to a tragic car accident. Dick Fliehler and Mitch Kopczyk were both in their 50's. They were Harley-Davidson biker friends, and a bit untamed. And both enjoyed the outdoors — hunting, fishing, and camping in Montana. I think I even caught them bird watching on occasion.

Dick Fliehler, affectionately known as "HogDick" by friends, frequently volunteered for the ORI and helped with Northern Hawk, Boreal, and Long-eared owl projects. A reliable member of our volunteer staff, he contributed many significant field observations. He also helped maintain our four-wheelers, snowmobiles, and other gear for our back-country research. HogDick and Mitch will be missed by many friends.



Dick searching for Boreal Owls

RESEARCH

Of our seven major research projects, we sustain six in western Montana and one in Barrow, Alaska. The timeline of studies is as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Long-Eared Owl								Long-Eared Owl			
					Snowy Owl						
Small Cavity Nesting Owls											
		Barn Owl									
Northern Hawk Owl											
				Flammulated Owl							
Short-eared Owl											

LONG-EARED OWL This project is now in its 24th year. This study is one of the longest-running and most comprehensive in the world. During winter 2009, for the third year in a row, Long-eared Owl numbers were relatively low. This trend is undoubtedly tied to low prey populations (voles).

With the upcoming winter, we are anticipating an increase in Long-eared Owl populations because voles appear to be rebounding. For more in-depth information about the species, refer to the "Research Profile" (pages 6 and 7).



Long-eared Owl

SNOWY OWL Our 18th season researching Snowy Owls and Brown Lemmings in Barrow yielded low population numbers and zero nests. During our three-month season, we recorded about 20 individual Snowy Owls. Most were males, both young and adult. Females were absent, a finding that adheres to all years of data: Females are scarce when lemmings are low. Where females go during these times, we do not know. However, our satellite data from 2000-2002 indicate a wide range for females, moving from Alaska to Russia, and from Russia to Canada, probably in search of food.



Snowy Owl

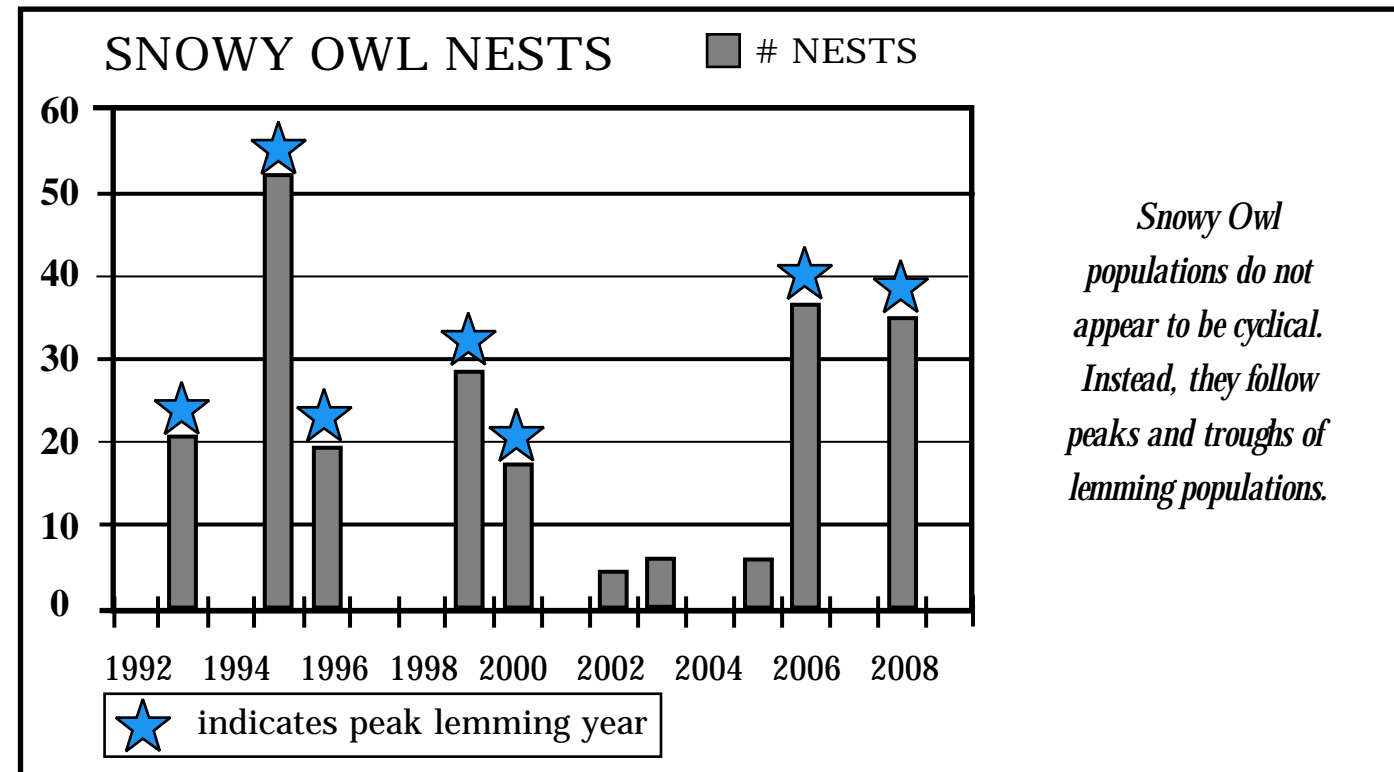
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The graph below shows number of Snowy Owl nests per year from 1992-2009. The species' populations are thought to be cyclic in relation to lemming population fluctuations, with 3-4-year cycles. However, our research has yielded no clear cyclical pattern. Instead, we only find a direct association between peaks and troughs of owl and lemming populations.

Snowy Owls are also a barometer for potential effects of global climate change. We already know that Arctic vegetation is changing. This alteration could directly affect lemming populations, which feed on Arctic grasses, sedges, and forbs. In turn, changes in lemming populations could directly impact Snowy Owl populations, because lemmings are the Snowy Owl's primary prey. Thus, our study could yield insight into how climate change affects the Arctic ecosystem.

Throughout the summer, we also sample lemming populations. We have recorded over 35,000 prey animals eaten by Snowy Owls in the Barrow research area. Of these, Brown Lemmings represent over 90% of prey eaten, illustrating the close tie between predator and prey. Indeed, over our 18-year study, we have found that when Brown Lemmings are abundant, Snowy Owls breed, and when the lemmings are at a low, the owls rarely breed.

Again, lemming populations were low in 2009, and no Snowy Owls bred. This low follows a peak year in 2008, low in 2007, and peak in 2006. Although lemming numbers were low in 2009, a few lemmings were breeding, suggesting a population increase for next year.



SMALL CAVITY NESTING OWLS Once again, numbers of cavity nesting owls were low. We detected one nest each for Northern Pygmy, Northern Saw-whet, and Boreal owls. Although we detected Western Screech Owls in western Montana this year, we did not find any nests.

Our nest site data indicates that Northern Pygmy Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls appear to prefer, on average, trees with a DBH (Diameter Breast Height) of 18 inches. Thus, it would appear that forest managers, to provide nest sites for these owls, would simply need to leave standing trees of this size.

However, this 18-inch average can vary substantially. Northern Pygmy Owls, in a grove of Trembling Aspen, opt for trees with a DBH of 13 inches. And Northern Saw-whet Owls, in a grove of Western Larch, choose trees with a DBH of 26 inches. Thus, a universal DBH, broadly applied to all forests, may not be useful for these species.

In addition to tree size, tree condition needs to be more extensively considered. Typically, the practice is to leave standing trees with Pileated Woodpecker holes. The assumption is that this kind of cavity will suffice for all species. However, this assumption may be too broad. For instance, Northern Pygmy Owls nest primarily in natural holes where a small branch has rotted out, and secondarily in small holes created by sapsuckers. Northern Saw-whet Owls prefer woodpecker holes made either by Northern Flickers or Pileated Woodpeckers. Thus, a more variable approach may be needed, if we are to manage for all species of cavity nesting owls.



Colleen Bitter and Boreal Owl

Meanwhile, Boreal Owls present a challenge all their own. Their breeding season begins mid-winter, and their range tends to be high-elevation. As a result, the species is frequently overlooked. Despite these difficulties, ORI began surveying for Boreal Owls in 1982, finding the first and second nests in the state. This monitoring program continued to 1990.

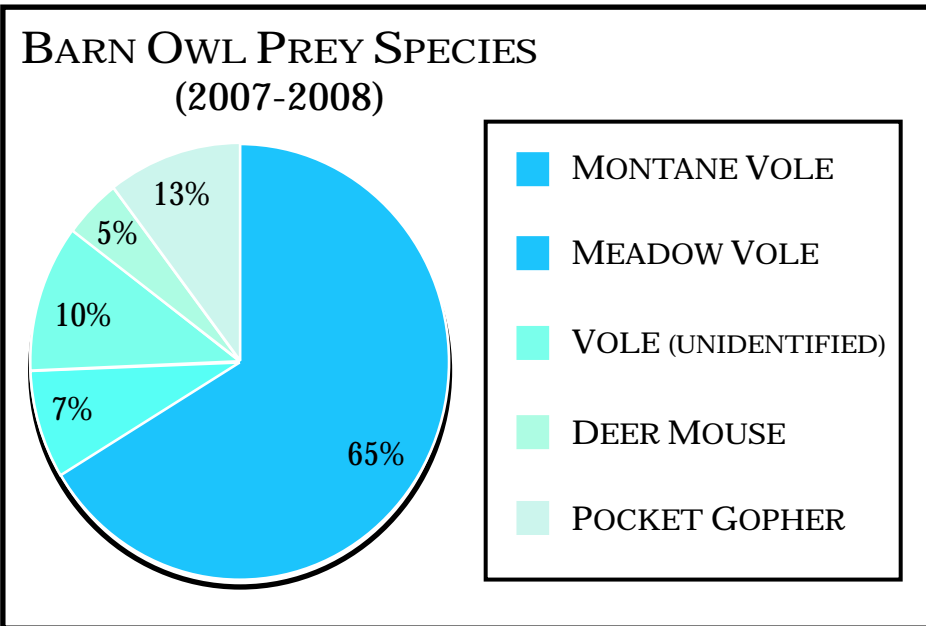
Then in 1995, we took over the monitoring of nest boxes on the Bitterroot and Beaverhead National Forests. So far, we have found approximately 20 artificial nests. Although this is a substantial amount of data for an elusive avian predator, it only encapsulates the use of nest boxes. We need to broaden our study to also assess the degree to which Boreal Owls use natural nest sites.

BARN OWL No Barn Owl nests were found in 2009. This marks the third year in a row in which Barn Owls have had low to poor reproductive success. Several factors probably contribute to this trend.

First and foremost is food. Like several other species of owls we study, Barn Owls eat small, open-country species of mammals. Here in western Montana, voles are the important food. The graph on page 5 shows Barn Owl diet for 2007 and 2008, dominated by two species of voles. Interestingly, however, the fossorial Northern Pocket Gopher is also moderately represented in the owls' diet. How the owls are capturing these underground rodents is unknown.



Caroline Deppe and Northern Pygmy Owl



Although this dataset is small, it is already providing insight into Barn Owl diet. Thanks to high school student Jess Pratt for assisting with this study.

A second factor influencing Barn Owl nesting may be the scarcity of nest sites, both natural and artificial (man-made). Natural nest sites appear to be limited in our area. Artificial nest sites may also have declined: Two of our regular, artificial nest sites (in a church and a barn) were lost, due to construction activity. We continue to investigate the role of natural versus artificial nest sites in Barn Owl breeding activity.

NORTHERN HAWK OWL As we predicted in 2008, Northern Hawk Owl numbers increased during the 2009 breeding season in Glacier National Park (GNP). We suspect that the increase was due to a surge in small mammal numbers in the GNP area.

In 2009, we initiated our first surveys in Flathead National Forest (FNF), close to GNP. These surveys yielded no breeding Northern Hawk Owls. However, because habitat in the area appears promising for hawk owls, we will continue these surveys in FNF in 2010.

We did not systematically survey in GNP this year because of a lack of funding. When possible, however, we investigated reports made by park visitors. This work was facilitated by staff from the Park Café in St. Mary's, Montana, just outside GNP. We established a relationship with the café, and they in turn gave information about the Northern Hawk Owl to visitors, collecting numerous reports of hawk owls and nesting activity in GNP.

We now have conclusive evidence of 19 nests occurring in GNP, and one nest in FNF. Most were discovered through our surveys in 2005-2006. Twelve of these nests were identified to actual tree: Six occurred in trees where fire burned an existing

branch, leaving behind a cavity; five were in burned trees whose tops broke off, leaving a small bowl in which the owls nested; and one was in a hole excavated by a Pileated Woodpecker.

There is also circumstantial evidence of a few other nests in 2007-2009, but they lack the detailed reporting needed to confirm nesting. Interestingly, however, all nest sites and most observations from the last ten years have been sited in post-fire forests.

FLAMMULATED OWL Mat Seidensticker continues his graduate work. Although it can be extremely difficult to study this secretive, elusive species, Mat hangs in there. During intensive survey (May-Aug.), Mat found no nests or evidence of nesting. However, he and crew sighted numerous Flammulated Owls, apparently on territory and singing for mates, as well as birds entering potential nest cavities and copulating. Despite these discoveries, they could not verify whether nesting occurred, even after repeated re-checking of areas. Later surveys during the fledging period (when young depart the nest and make food begging calls) did not yield sightings of young owls.

continued...



Flammulated Owl



Northern Hawk Owl

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...continued from page 5

These results underscore the fact that simple presence of birds, and even occurrence of courtship activity, may not necessarily indicate successful breeding. Forest management models, without feedback from actual breeding data, lack information needed to manage for healthy populations of this species in Montana. Protection is particularly important because Montana's Flammulated Owl is listed as sensitive by U.S. Forest Service (Region 1) and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (Montana/Dakotas). The owl has also been determined a Tier 1 Species of Concern by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

SHORT-EARED OWL Short-eared Owls have declined in much of North America, in direct relation to loss of open grasslands, shrublands, and marshes. In Montana, the owl is listed as a "Potential Species of Concern" by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

In 2009, Matt Larson, University of Montana wildlife biology student, initiated Mission Valley surveys to establish what techniques could be used to detect this species. With a few more seasons of survey, we hope to use this protocol for a nationwide approach.



Short-eared Owl

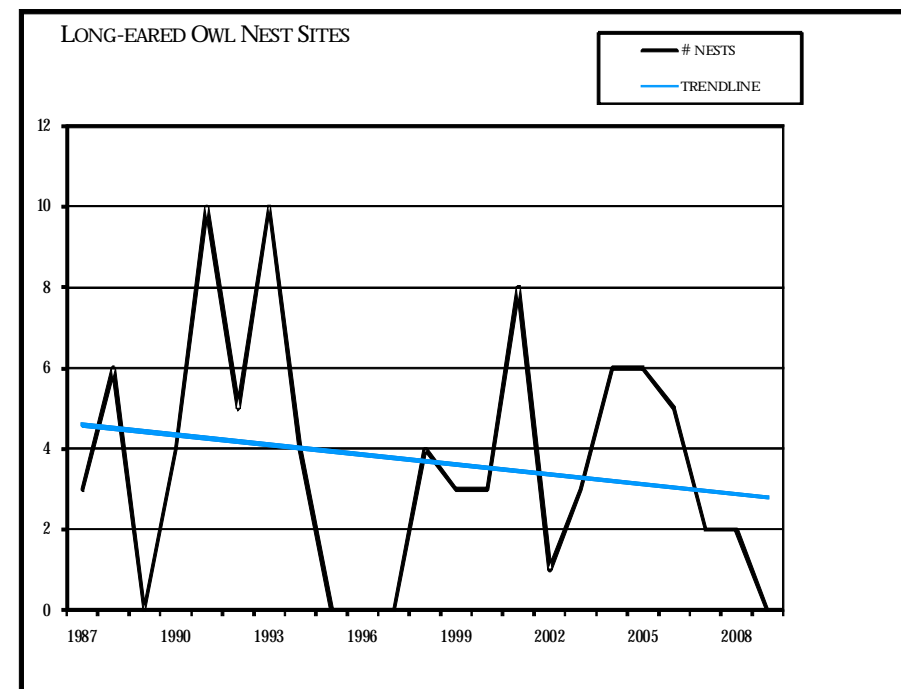
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Already, however, it appears that visual, crepuscular surveys (as opposed to auditory, nocturnal ones) are more useful for detecting these owls. In Matt's study, 92% of all Short-eared Owl detections took place during visual evening surveys, while only 8% occurred by ear during nighttime playback surveys.

RESEARCH PROFILE: LONG-EARED OWL

Unlike other open-country species of owls, hawks, or other birds, Long-eared Owls are secretive by day and active by night. These behaviors cause them to be overlooked by most bird monitoring programs. As a result, their population status is unknown on a national scale. However, if Long-eared Owl populations are going the way of other open-country species of birds in the U.S., then they are likely to be declining.

For the past 24 years, we have tracked Long-eared Owl populations in western Montana. Indeed, our dataset clearly shows that Long-eared Owl numbers fluctuate over time, likely in response to population fluctuations of prey. The graph on this page shows numbers of Long-eared Owl nests, from 1987 to 2009 in the Missoula Valley of western Montana. The regression line indicates a downward trend.



Of the 210 nests we have located, all but a few occurred in abandoned Black-billed Magpie nests. Although the magpie is often considered a pest species, here in our study area, it builds almost all nests that Long-eared Owls use. Only female Long-eared Owls incubate and brood young, while males provide food. Usually 4-5 eggs are laid. Chicks hatch asynchronously (in the order eggs are laid) and grow quickly. At three weeks of age, they leave their nest, about two weeks before they can fly. During that time, chicks roost in trees and shrubs and scream at night for their parents to feed them.

Once chicks attain sustained flight and hunting ability, the parents

abandon them. This usually occurs when chicks are about 10 to 14 weeks old. The female leaves the chicks first, followed by the male about two weeks later. The male and female, which breed once per year, will not mate with each other in subsequent years. That is, Long-eared Owls have new mates annually.

During winter, Long-eared Owls form communal roosts, with group sizes most often 5-7. However, we have recorded groups of 30 or more, and even a group of 80. Our data show that roosts comprise both males and females, and both young and old individuals. Very rarely are related individuals found in roosts. Roost sites, as with nest sites, tend to be in dense woody draws or in thickets within grassland or shrubland communities.

Habitats where Long-eared Owls live tend to be overlooked in conservation schemes. These woody draws, made up of hawthorn and chokecherry species, are some of the first habitats to be affected when development moves into grassland and shrubland habitats in western Montana.

Our data indicate that like Barn Owls and Short-eared Owls, Long-eared Owls feed primarily on small mammals, particularly voles. In fact, we have recorded over 35,000 prey items, with over 90% being two species of voles. Clearly, the Long-eared Owl is a benefit to farmers and ranchers.



Denver Holt and Long-eared Owl

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS, 2009

- Bertha Morton Scholarship: Mathew Seidensticker, Flammulated Owl
- Five Valleys Audubon: Mathew Seidensticker, Flammulated Owl
- Matthew Hansen Scholarship: Jessica Crowley and Matt Larson, for work on a children's book on owls
- Miles Scholarship: Matthew Larson, Short-eared Owl

DWIGHT (STOCKY) STOCKSTAD RESEARCH AWARD

University of Montana Wildlife Biology student Matt Larson is the recipient of this \$1,000 award. His work ethic falls in line with exactly what Stocky would have admired. For ORI, Matt has worked the night shift, hiking through forests to survey for Flammulated Owls. He has crawled through countless thorn thickets to trap and band Long-eared Owls. He has cross-country skied and snow-shoed through Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest to look for Northern Hawk Owls. He has hiked hundreds of thankless miles on the Alaskan tundra to research Snowy Owls and Brown Lemmings. And nowadays, he is establishing a highly useful protocol for surveying Short-eared Owls. Much of this work has been conducted as a volunteer or while working for small research grants. Congratulations, Matt.



Matt and Denver study Short-eared Owls

EDUCATION

ORI is dedicated to providing high-quality, small-group science education — experiences that connect people to the natural world. Education includes volunteer research experiences, internships, days in the field, and classes and lectures.

VOLUNTEER RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

The following volunteers contributed hundreds of hours to ORI, assisting with field trapping, banding, surveys, and data processing: Colleen Bitter, Jessica Crowley, Caroline Deppe, Megan Fylling, Steve Hiro, Matt Larson, and Mat Seidensticker. While sharpening their skills as field biologists, they contributed invaluable data to our long-term research programs. Our newest volunteer is Ervin Davis, retired school principal from Charlo, Montana. He has joined us to enter and summarize data from our long-term projects. Ervin is well-known for his many years of bluebird banding and monitoring in western Montana.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE



Steve Hiro working on the Long-eared Owl project

For more than ten years, Steve Hiro has dedicated vacation time and weekends to countless ORI projects. Indeed, Steve often runs the trapping and banding station set-up. The guy with the steady hands turned out to be a heart surgeon at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula, Montana. We initially met Steve when he paid a lot of money at a hospital fundraiser to win a day in the field with ORI. Since then, Steve has loyally volunteered his time and become one of our most trusted staff. He has worked with owls in both Alaska and Montana, as well as participated in programs in Mexico and Tanzania. In addition to steady hands, Steve brings along optimism, brainpower, and tremendous support. Now that he is somewhat retired, we hope to see more of him.

INTERNSHIPS

Interns learned to conduct owl surveys, nest searches, and diet studies. They also gained skills in bird identification. After the experience, many go on to earn scientific graduate degrees, serve in wildlife research and management, or teach science or environmental education. They often report that our program helps them throughout their careers. Here are just a few of 2009's intern experiences:

HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Montana high school students Jess Pratt (Missoula), Ann Thompson and Zach Dougherty (both of Charlo) assisted with Barn Owl studies.

Undergraduate members of Montana Chapter of the Wilderness Society (Missoula) helped with the Snowy Owl dietary study.

Teens (from indigenous communities in Mexico and Alaska) interned with the Snowy Owl project. They conducted field study, worked in the lab, and prepared a presentation. This program partnered ORI with Barrow Arctic Science Consortium, Ilisagvik College, and the National Science Foundation.



Wilderness Society students assist with pellet dissection



BASC Interns help with Snowy Owl study

GRADUATE STUDENTS Sofi Hindmarch from Simon Frazier University (British Columbia) assisted with field research, both in Montana and Alaska. She is also developing a comprehensive GIS map of Snowy Owl nest sites, in order to assess species density in our study area.



Sofi Hindmarch in the field

Kristen Keyes, a graduate student at McGill University (Quebec, Canada), and Marcel Gahlbauer, director of Migration Research Foundation in Calgary, visited ORI to observe and discuss research methods for Keyes' Short-eared Owl study.

Matt Larson and Mat Seidensticker, University of Montana, continue their studies on Short-eared and Flammulated owls, respectively.

Karla Kinsler, from Houston Nature Center (Minnesota), visited ORI to record Great Horned Owl vocalizations, as part of a Master's in Science. Karla is interested in determining if local dialects occur in owls.

TEACHERS AND WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS

Elaine Moore, elementary school science teacher (Maine), received a school grant to visit ORI. She learned about owls and field techniques, experiences she incorporated into her classroom.

The following Montana biologists studied field research techniques: Laura Cerruti (Bureau of Land Management), Emily Shock (National Bison Range), and Monica Pokorny and Keri Eneas (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes).



Emily Shock (Natl Bison Range) in the field

DAY IN THE FIELD

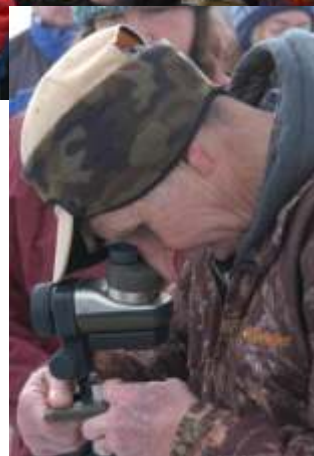
ORI donates a day in the field to schools, community groups, and fundraisers. Participants experience owl research projects: They assist with scouting and setting nests, and they observe owl banding and data collection. They also learn local natural history.

The 2009 recipients of the donation included Big Sky High School, Five Valleys Audubon, Glacier Fund, Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society, NPR (KUFM), Ninepipes Museum, St. Ignatius Middle School, Salish and Kootenai College, and University of Montana Wilderness and Civilization.



St. Ignatius Middle School

Larry Weeks (Five Valleys Audubon) joins us for a Day in the Field



CLASSES AND LECTURES

We delivered educational programs to Barrow Arctic Science Consortium; Flathead Valley Audubon; Glacier National Park; Mission Mountain Audubon; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Montana Youth Challenge Program; and Ronan Middle School.



Denver presents to Flathead Valley Audubon

OUTREACH

Here are a few other ways in which our research reaches the world. To learn more, visit our website at www.owlsinstitute.org. A very special thanks to Jen Sauter for maintaining our site!

POPULAR PUBLICATIONS

Children's Books. Our award-winning children's book series started with *Owls: Who Are They* (1996) and *Snowy Owls: Who Are They* (2008). The third, *Owls of North America: Who Are They*, is slated for publication in 2011. These user-friendly books provide a vast amount of information about natural history, while making science engaging and fun.

Frozen Planet. This nature documentary is a sequel to the award-winning *Blue Planet* (2001) and *Planet Earth* (2006). Film crews teamed with us to film Snowy Owls. Air date fall 2011 (BBC) and spring 2012 (Discovery).

Home Ground Radio. Brian Kahn of Home Ground Radio interviewed Denver Holt about owls: why humans are so interested in them, and why they matter (aired 6/7 and 6/9/09).

National Wildlife Federation. The life history of Northern Pygmy Owls, and of Denver Holt, is featured in this article by Tom Dickson.

Patagonia developed an environmental t-shirt with a picture of a Snowy Owl on the outside, and description of ORI on the inside. The "Snow Owl" shirt can be purchased at Patagonia and REI.

(Art by Alison Kasyjanski)



MANUSCRIPTS PUBLISHED/IN PRESS IN 2009

- * Eye Injuries in Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*): Prevalence and Survival. *J. Raptor Research*: 42: 243-247.
- * Feeding Ecology of Snowy Owls Wintering in West-Central Montana: With Comparisons to other North American Studies. *J. Raptor Research* 42: 172-179.
- * The 2005 to 2006 Snowy Owl Irruption Migration to Western Montana: *NW Naturalist*. 89: 145-151.
- * Characteristics of Nest Mounds Used By Snowy Owls. *in press*, *Ardea*.
- * Corticosterone as Measure of Stress in Nest-Bound and Nest-Departed Long-eared Owl Chicks. *in press*, *Ardea*.
- * Flushing Effects and Seasonal Changes on Corticosterone Levels in Adult Long-eared Owls. *in press*, *Ardea*.

MANUSCRIPTS IN REVIEW

- * Natal Philopatry in Female Long-eared Owls
- * Sexing Long-eared Owls using Plumage Coloration
- * A Technique for Sexing Young Snowy Owls
- * Why Are Snowy Owls White?

NATURAL HISTORY TOURS

For those of you interested in natural history tours, visit Wild Planet Nature Tours, run by Megan Fylling and Denver Holt, at www.wildplanetnaturetours.com.

Denver also leads tours for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, the largest company in the world specializing in birding tours. Victor recently described Denver as "one of the finest naturalists I know" (www.ventbird.com).

PARTNERSHIPS

Around the Americas builds awareness of threats to the ocean. This summer, the ORI taught their staff (scientists, sailors, conservationists, and writers) about Snowy Owls and Arctic ecology. We also visited their ship, which monitors ocean health (Alaska).

Art Hang-Up provided invaluable assistance with our traveling owl poster display (Missoula, Montana).

Barrow Arctic Science Consortium logistically supports our Snowy Owl project (Alaska).

Global Owl Project has teamed with us to improve owl survey protocols.

Kettlehouse Brewing Company hosted a fundraiser for ORI in October. It was a great way to get members together (Missoula, Montana).

Land Access. A big thanks to the many private and public landowners who let us conduct research on their land. Public entities in Montana are Bureau of Land Management; Flathead Indian Reservation; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and U.S. Forest Service. A major Alaskan partner is United Inupiat Corporation.

Michael Alexander generously donates his Hat Party photos. View more of his work at www.m-i-t-i.com.

Natural Exposures. Dan and Tanya Cox donate innumerable images for public relations and artistic publications (www.naturalexposures.com).

Nikon supports our Snowy Owl research and supplies high-quality optics. Denver, a Nikon "Pro Staff" member, provides product reviews and field tips (www.nikonbirding.com).

Raptor View Research Institute has long collaborated with ORI to conduct raptor research. Their focus, however, is diurnal, while ORI's is nocturnal.

University of Montana Avian Science Center is partnering with ORI to teach an avian research

2009 HAT PARTY

BRINGING CONSTITUENTS TOGETHER

The 9th Mission Valley Hat Party was huge. Between 600 – 650 people attended. Ticket takers at the gate shut down around 9:30 p.m., yet people continued to arrive. As usual, guests visited from all over the U.S., and this year, a few even came from Canada.

This year's weather was perhaps the best ever — sunny skies and temperatures in the mid-80s. Not only was there a record number of people, but there was also record consumption of food and beverage: Partygoers ate 830 lbs of beef and pork (as opposed to last year's 695), 30+ gallons of beans, 300 lbs of melons, several vats of pasta and green salads, and innumerable pastries and pies. Attendees also drank 21 kegs of beer, 11 cases of wine, 8 cases of soda, and 30 gallons of water. There were no food or beverage items left over this year.

The Jerry Clemens One-man Band opened the show for a ninth consecutive year. Jerry played a two-hour set. Next came Rob Quist, playing with *White Hawk*. This Montana band also contains Quist's son and daughter. They played folk, rock, and ballads for three hours. As evening progressed, *Cabin Fever* emerged, playing dance music (rock, country, funk, and R&B) until 1:30 a.m.

The campfire scene revved up around 1:30 a.m., when local Montana musicians (mostly from *Little Smokies*) began to play bluegrass. A few hard-core musicians played until sunrise. Fortunately for them, it was a warm night.

More than 150 people camped. They woke up to coffee, pastries, and fruit for breakfast. Thanks to these folks for helping with Hat Party cleanup — the many hands made this task much easier.

We also have a core staff of 25 volunteers. They oversee bartending, cooking, decorating, food serving, gate keeping, meat carving, music making, pie baking, photographing, and grounds-keeping. Several take time off from work, and most have volunteered for all nine Hat Parties. Although we cannot name them all here, they are greatly appreciated. There is no way a party of this size could function without them.

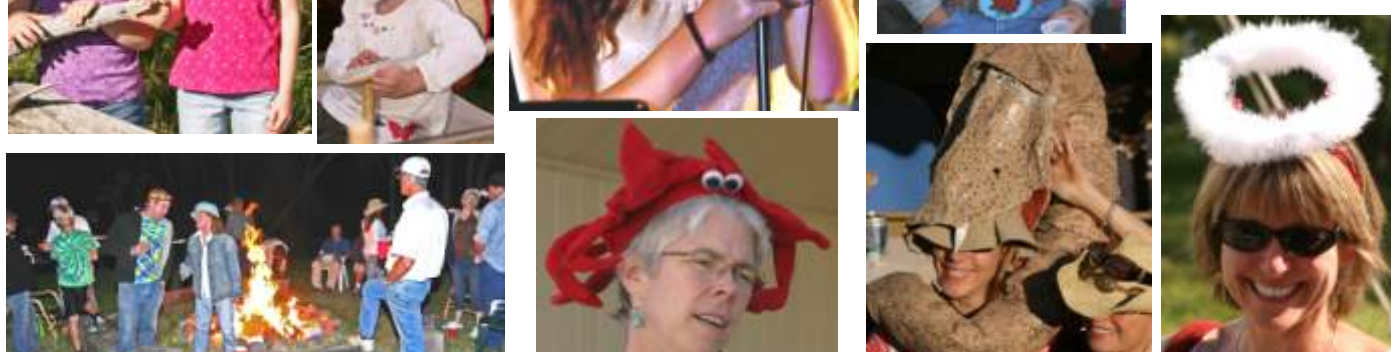
SAVE THE DATE: Next year's hat party, the 10th, is Saturday, September 11, 2010, beginning at 4 p.m. at Ninepipes Center for Wildlife Research and Education. Mark your calendar! All constituents are welcome!

2009 HAT PARTY SPONSORS

The following businesses contributed to the Hat Party in many ways. We are very grateful to them and encourage you to give them your support.

Ace Hardware (Missoula)	Good Food Store (Missoula)	Rockin Rudy's (Missoula)
Albertson's on Reserve (Missoula)	Great Harvest Bread (Missoula)	Rocky Mountain Signworks (Ronan)
Allied Waste Services (Ronan)	Hanson & Granley True Value (Ronan)	Rod's Harvest Foods (St. Ignatius)
Anderson Radio (Polson)	Health Care Plus (Polson)	Ronan Harvest Foods/Moody's (Ronan)
Bayern Brewing (Missoula)	Hummingbird Toys & Treats (Arlee)	Ronan Telephone Company (Ronan)
Bernice's Bakery (Missoula)	Iron Horse Brew Pub (Missoula)	Rosauer's (Missoula)
Big Sky (Missoula)	Karma Enterprises (Laurel)	Rose Bud Deli (Ronan)
Blackfoot Brewing (Helena)	Le Petit Outre (Missoula)	S.G. Long and Company (Missoula)
Boyle, Deveny and Meyer (Missoula)	Mandorla Guest Retreat (Ronan)	Safeway (Polson)
Brady's Sportsman's Surplus (Missoula)	Mission General Store (St. Ignatius)	Safeway on Reserve (Missoula)
Break Espresso (Missoula)	Mission Mart IGA (Ronan)	Sitting Duck (Bigfork)
Caras Nursery (Missoula)	Mission Mountain Winery (Dayton)	Staples on Brooks (Missoula)
Charlie B's (Missoula)	Mission Valley Health Clinic (St. Ignatius)	St-Char-Ro Floral (Ronan)
Charlo Grocery (Charlo)	Mission Valley Printing (Ronan)	Summit Beverage (Missoula)
Community Bank (Ronan)	Mountain Habitat (Missoula)	Target (Missoula)
Culligan Water (Missoula)	Mountain Press Publishing (Missoula)	Terrace (Polson)
Dave Taylor Roofing (Missoula)	Mountain West Co-op (Cenex) (Ronan)	The Cellars (Missoula)
Depot Restaurant (Missoula)	Natural Exposures (Bozeman)	The Keep (Missoula)
Dixon Melons (Dixon)	Ninepipes Lodge (Charlo)	TJ Maxx (Missoula)
Dollar Rent-A-Car (Missoula)	Northwestern Energy (Missoula)	Towne Mailer (Missoula)
Doubletree Hotel (Missoula)	Orange Street Food Farm (Missoula)	Tumbleweed Studio (St. Ignatius)
Doyle Sheehan (Missoula)	Pattee Creek Market (Missoula)	Valley Bank (Ronan)
El Topo Cantina (Bigfork)	Pink Grizzly Greenhouse (Missoula)	VW Ice (Missoula) (Missoula)
Energy Partners LLC (Missoula)	Prudential Real Estate (Missoula)	Walmart on 93 (Missoula)
Fidelity Title (Polson)	Rainbow Septic (Ronan)	Walmart Super Center (Missoula)
44 Bar and Outwest Grill (St. Ignatius)	Raven Restaurant (Bigfork)	White Elephant (Ronan)
Gardner Construction (Charlo)	Red Bird Restaurant & Wine (Missoula)	White's Wholesale Meats (Ronan)
George's Distributing (Helena)	REI (Missoula)	Windmill Village (Ravalli)
Glacier Brewing Company (Polson)	Ricciardi's Restaurant (Polson)	Zip Beverage (Missoula)

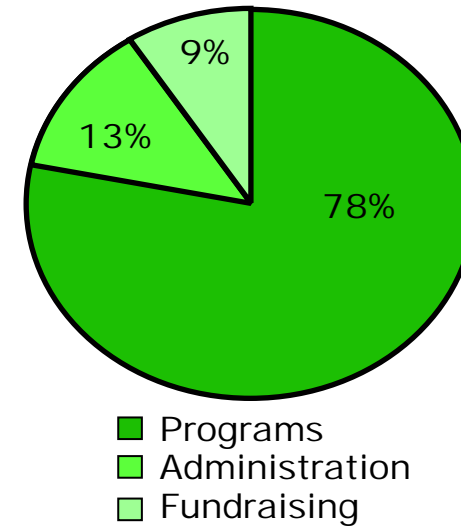




ORI Financial Report: FY 2008

Revenue	\$146,034
Expenses	(\$151,563)
Revenue - Expenses	(\$5529)

ORI Expenses by Category



Northern Pygmy Owls depart their nest (see p.4)



Jess Pratt and ORI study Barn Owl pellets (see p.4)



Matt Larson scopes out Short-eared Owls (see p.6)

2009 WISH LIST

In addition to monetary donations, ORI depends on other contributions. Each year we outline a wish list, with hopes of receiving a few of these items:

- ◆ ATV (4-wheeler)
- ◆ Books, journals, & wildlife art
- ◆ Camper trailer
- ◆ Chest freezer
- ◆ Field vehicle (Suburban)
- ◆ Float boat or Zodiac
- ◆ Flatbed trailer (heavy duty)
- ◆ Large boulders
- ◆ Lumber & building goods
- ◆ Outdoor lawn furniture
- ◆ Power Point projector
- ◆ Power tools
- ◆ Riding lawn mower (large)
- ◆ Scanner
- ◆ Snowmobiles & trailer
- ◆ Wall tent & camping gear
- ◆ Wood stove (modern w/stove pipes)

Our programs would not be possible without your generosity. Thank you.

COMPANY & CORPORATE SPONSORS

ABR Inc., Alaska
 Barrow Arctic Science Consortium, Alaska
 Five Valleys Audubon, Montana
 Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana
 Garmin International Inc., Kansas
 Kettlehouse Brewing Company, Montana
 Holt Trucking, Massachusetts
 Queirolo Farms, California
 Mission Mountain Audubon, Polson
 Natural Exposures, Montana
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 Patagonia, California
 Stantec Consulting; Alberta, Canada
 UIC Real Estate, Alaska

FOUNDATION SPONSORS

American Express (Just Give program)
 American Wildlife Conservation Foundation
 Banbury Fund
 Cinnabar Foundation
 Conservation Congress
 Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation

FOUNDATION SPONSORS, continued

Dow Chemical Foundation (matching gift program)
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 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
 National Wildlife Federation
 Norcross Foundation
 Pleiades Foundation
 Plum Creek Foundation
 Pittsburgh Foundation
 Prudential Foundation (matching gift program)
 Seligson Johnson Foundation
 Wellpoint Foundation (associate giving campaign)
 Woods Foundation

GOVERNMENT SPONSORS

Bureau of Land Management, Montana
 Flathead National Forest, Montana

WALL OF SUPPORT



To secure your name on the Wall of Support, please fill out and return the form below. Complete the form exactly as you wish it to appear on the wall. We will use the weathered exterior wood siding from one of our buildings for your name. When the barn renovation is complete, the Wall of Support will be constructed. There are four size categories to choose from for your donation: \$100 = 2"; \$250 = 3"; \$500 = 4"; and \$1000 or more = 5". Included with a \$1000 donation is an animal and/or plant of your choice. (See example below.)



Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Center for Wildlife Research & Education

YES — I WANT MY NAME ON THE WALL OF SUPPORT

Name _____
 Size: 2" _____ 3" _____ 4" _____ 5" _____ Animal, Bird, Plant _____
 Donation amount enclosed \$ _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone () _____ E-mail _____

CONSTITUENTS: *We do not list the names of our constituents in our newsletter as a courtesy to them, unless they specifically want to be recognized. Many wish to remain anonymous. We will, however, list individuals, foundations, or corporations that want to be recognized on the Wall of Support.*

The ORI is a non-profit, 501(c) 3, tax-exempt organization. We are funded by individual donations, grants from foundations, government entities, and corporations. Please consider us in your estate planning. We accept donations of real property, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, life insurance policies, and gift annuities. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent of the law. We ask for funding once per year. We hope you make your donation today. Our federal tax identification number is 81-0453479.



Snowy Owl

Pamela Moriarty



OWL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
 PO Box 39
 Charlo, MT 59824
 406-644-3412
owlmontana@blackfoot.net
www.owlinstitute.org

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