

Winter Owl Surveying in Central Alberta

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Abstract.—During the past 9 years we have collected data from calling owls at over 400 sites. Most of the calling was done during the winter and almost all of it in central Alberta with much of it in permanently fragmented agricultural/forested areas. We found mainly Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) and Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) with a few Boreal Owls (*Aegolius funereus*), Barred Owls (*Strix varia*), Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*), Northern Pygmy-owls (*Glaucidium gnoma*) and Great Gray Owls (*Strix nebulosa*). The owls responded to taped calls by giving alarm calls, singing their primary song, and approaching the caller. We have been able to get both Northern Saw-whet Owls and Great Horned Owls to sing their primary song at temperatures as low as -30°C. Our data shows that: (1) Small owls do not seem to be deterred by the calls of larger owls. (2) Owls often respond more readily to calls of other species than to their own. (3) The moon does not appear to affect the response of owls to taped calls. Successful winter calling involves patience, very warm clothing, good equipment and a severe case of cabin fever.

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