

NOTES

BOREAL OWL SIGHTING IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

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On 3 February 1974 at 1400 we located a Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) approximately 1 km northwest of Soda Butte in the Lamar Valley of northern Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming (44° 50' N, 110° 10' W). The sighting occurred in a fairly open stand of Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*). When first sighted the owl was perched on a dead limb 2 m above the ground, but later flew 10 m to a live Douglas-fir where it perched 4 m above the ground. Seemingly undisturbed by our presence, the owl allowed us to approach within 5 m to observe and photograph it for nearly an hour (Figure 1).

The only previous record of the Boreal Owl in Yellowstone Park was a dead bird found during the winter of 1951 (Arnold 1951). The one other Wyoming record is a sight record for December 1927 (McCreary 1937).

Of six apparently reliable Montana records, four were between September and February. Saunders (1921) reported a specimen taken in 1902 near Columbia Falls although the specimen is not now known to exist. A fresh road kill was discovered near Bozeman in September 1964. This specimen is presently in the Montana State University collection (Skaar 1969). In November 1959 a Boreal Owl was photographed repeatedly near Missoula (Hoffmann and Hand 1962). The remaining Montana records are sight records, the most recent being of 3 dependent young near the Canadian border in Glacier National Park in July 1973 (Rogers 1973).

Washington's only undisputed record is a specimen collected near Pullman 10 January 1974 (Rogers 1974).

Idaho records reveal only two specimens, both collected in the extreme northern portion of the state (Burleigh 1972).

Of five records which exist for Colorado, three are specimens collected in October and November (Bailey and Niedrach 1967). The fourth is a specimen which was found dead near Estes Park in April (Scott 1970). The fifth record, occurring in August, included two juveniles, one of which was collected (Baldwin and Koplin 1966).

The species' winter range as described by the AOU Check-list includes northern Montana and extends as far south as southern Idaho and Colorado. The breeding range covers much of northwestern Canada and Alaska, but nowhere extends as far south as the Rocky Mountain states (AOU 1957). However, Baldwin and Koplin (1966) cite the 14 August 1963 observation of two juveniles (one collected) in north-central Colorado as evidence of isolated breeding units considerably south of the species' normal breeding range. Bent's (1938) feeling that the species is relatively nonmigratory tends to support this view. This hypothesis gains further support from the findings of Voous (1960) that the Boreal Owl in Asia occurs in small disjunct breeding units south of the normal breeding range.

In light of the strong possibility that small, isolated breeding units of the Boreal Owl may exist south of the contiguous breeding range, all observations in the northern United States should be carefully documented.



Figure 1 Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) photographed 1 km northwest of Soda Butte in the Lamar Valley of northern Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming on 3 February 1974

Photo by Robert A. Garrott

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