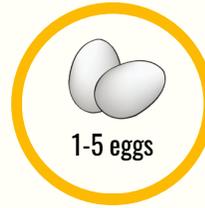
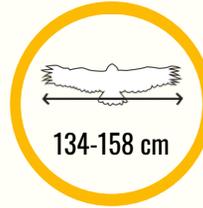




Great Gray Owl

Chouette lapone, *Strix nebulosa*



IDENTIFICATION

It can be recognized by its imposing size and large facial disk, which directs sound towards the ears, like a satellite dome picking up waves. A black patch is clearly visible under its beak and it has a thin white collar at the base of its face.



ECOLOGY

Nutrition

It feeds mainly on small rodents and more rarely on birds. It stalks at night and during the day, listening for small mammals moving under the snow. Once it has spotted its prey, it hovers above the snow and plunges talons first into the snow to catch it. It can't catch large prey, as it's too light and "small" under her thick plumage.

Breeding

It doesn't build a nest; it uses an old bird's nest, the top of a broken dead tree or man-made platforms. The female may lay between 1 and 5 eggs, but an average clutch consists of 3 or 4 eggs. The young fledge at around 5 to 6 weeks of age. They remain dependent on their parents for food for several more weeks.

DISTRIBUTION

It is found in the boreal forest from western and central Canada to southern Quebec, and in a small area of the western United States as far south as California. It lives mainly in coniferous forests and wooded bogs. An "irruption" phenomenon sometimes occurs when individuals leave their normal range in search of food. It is usually found in forests or woodlands close to open areas.

STATUS AND POPULATION

The species is classified as secure.¹ However, there is insufficient data to assess its current population status compared with 1970. Logging has a major impact on the population. It reduces the number of perches and nest-building trees in its breeding habitat.

¹ Wild species of Canada report, 2015

