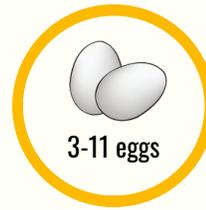
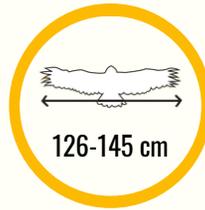




Snowy Owl

Harfang des neiges, *Bubo scandiacus*



IDENTIFICATION

Quebec's avian emblem, this large white owl with yellow eyes has plumage dotted with dark brown spots. Its short earlike tufts are hidden beneath the plumage of its head. It's the largest owl in Quebec! To protect it from the cold, its dense plumage covers it from beak to toes. In addition to being larger than the male, the adult female is usually more striped.



ECOLOGY

Nutrition

He watches over the fields from lampposts, silos, barn roofs or electricity poles. It often adopts a particular perch and shows up at the same time every day. It can eat from 7 to 12 small mammals a day. It also feeds on birds and sometimes fish. It is generally diurnal. If it chooses a farmer's field as its hunting ground, it is a great help in rodent control.

Breeding

The nest is built on the ground, on a mound that provides a vantage point for observing the surroundings. The nest is often no more than a simple depression lined with feathers, moss or grass. Many young birds starve to death during their first winter, due to the lack of available prey. They take flight for the first time at around 7 weeks of age. After 9 weeks, the young are able to hunt on their own. They depend on their parents from 5 to 7 weeks after leaving the nest.

DISTRIBUTION

It breeds in northern regions and nests in Canada's far north. It nests in open areas such as tundra, fields and flats, far from human activity. In winter, however, it can be found further south in Quebec. It can be observed in fields, meadows and marshes that mimic the tundra.

STATUS AND POPULATION

Collisions with vehicles are probably the most frequent cause of mortality. Although it is forbidden to hunt birds of prey in Quebec, it is sometimes injured or killed by firearm projectiles. The species is considered secure!¹

¹Wild species of Canada report, 2015

