

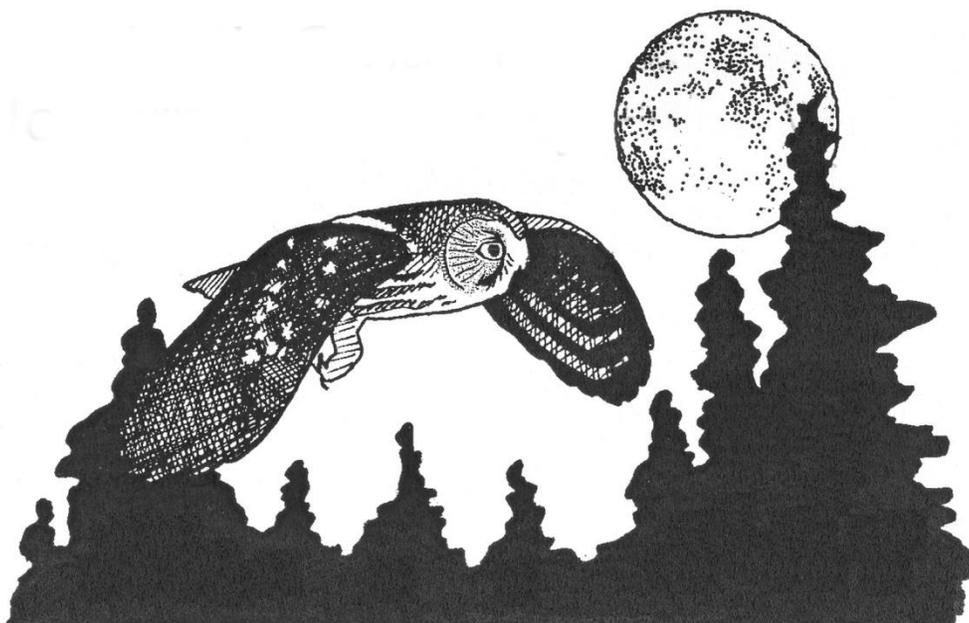
WHAT A NIGHT!

This is the 20th year that I am participating in the Owl Survey of Route #41. The first year (2001), Nora McLean had applied to survey this route. That evening, Nora, Eldon McLean and I did the survey. The route was very quiet. The only sound was a distant hoot that we could not even identify.

This evening, April 4, 2020, twenty years later, the conditions are totally different. We are in a lockdown due to Covid 19. I am hesitant in doing the survey. I study the recommendations of Bird Canada re: Survey with the Covid 19 virus. Via e-mail, I communicate with Karl Branch. We decide to do the survey, but with certain recommendations. First, we will use each our vehicle to do the survey; we will respect the two meter distancing and only one person (Karl) will handle the broadcasting tuner and I will be documenting the data.

We meet at Arseneau junction on Highway 180 and proceed to STOP 1, one km west along #180. At STOP 1, we do not hear any response to the broadcast calls. We do however hear a choir of coyotes in the area. Just before the broadcast ends, we hear an owl land in a poplar tree behind me. The Barred Owl, on the north side of the road, flies across the road to the south side, passing very close to my head. Does the owl not know the protocol of respecting the distancing?

BARRED OWL



At STOP 2, we have 2 Barred Owls answering our calls. We also get a response from 2 Northern Saw-whet Owls 1 Great-horned Owl. One Barred owl flies across the road from south to north at the end of the broadcast.

At STOP 3 we get a response from a Northern Saw-whet Owl and a Long-eared Owl.

At STOP 4, as we step out of our vehicles, we hear a Northern Saw-whet Owl's continuous toot. A second saw-whet joins in after the first Barred Owl broadcast call.

At STOP 5, we hear a Great-horned Owl after the last Barred Owl broadcast call. In the distance we also hear the sound of a snowmobile and a coyote's howl.

At STOP 6, we hear a Northern Saw-whet Owl tooting from a distance in a southerly direction.

At STOP 7, at 10:42 PM we have our hot chocolate break. Two Barred Owls are in a duet call. During this STOP, they still hoot but further away and in different directions.

At STOP 8, towards the end of the broadcast, we hear the hoot of a Barred Owl.

At STOP 9, things really get interesting. First we are surprised to hear a distinctive call from a Boreal Owl. The calls are continuous from the start of the broadcast until the end. We also detect a Northern Saw-whet Owl, a Great-horned Owl and 2 Barred Owls.



At STOP 10, our last STOP, again we hear the sound of a Boreal Owl during the entire STOP. A second Boreal Owl starts hooting at the same time as the first for a short period of time. A nearby Great-horned Owl, just northwest of Lucky Lake continues repeating its call during the broadcast time.

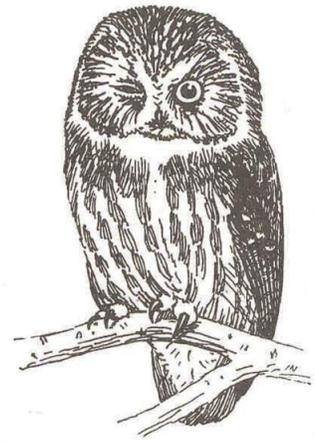
BOREAL OWL

We end the survey one minute after midnight. In 20 years of surveying this route, it is the first time we hear owls at every stop. It is also the first time that we have a total count of 23 owls detected. It is also the first time that we detect 5 different species of owls in one survey. This is also the first time that we do not have any traffic while doing our stops. We do not hear the rumbling noise of the Caribou Mine, being closed due to Covid 19. We do not hear the sound of the Wildcat Brook since it is still frozen. It is also the earliest date that we have surveyed this route.

WHAT A NIGHT! Rod O'Connell April 5, 2020.



NORTHERN SAW-
WHET OWL



GREAT-HORNED
OWL