



Wildlife conservation through research and education since 1988

Congratulations on your Northern Saw-whet Owl adoption! Your generous donation directly funds our work to understand and help protect this beautiful species. Thank you for your support!

Please enjoy the adoption documents that follow. If you would like your adoption certificate personalized, please don't hesitate to let me know at liberty@owlresearchinstitute.org and I will add your name to it right away. :)

ENJOY!



Northern
Saw-whet Owl
Aegolius acadicus



ORI
FACT
SHEET

Northern Saw-Whet Owl

With a vast ranges across North America, a Northern Saw-Whet may live near you. Listen for a repeated, monotonous whistle as your first clue



PHOTO © RADD ICENOGLE

Aegolius acadicus

Other tracking clues include pellets and whitewash (defecation) at the base of trees

As scientists, we tend to avoid words like cute, adorable, and the like. But when it comes to Northern Saw-whets, it is hard to avoid – with their tiny size and enormous eyes, descriptors like these are bound to come up! Saw-whets are not the smallest owls - the Elf Owl, at just 5 in ,earns this distinction – although they average only about 7 inches tall and expertly blend into their surroundings. This, combined with being highly nocturnal, can make them hard to locate and researching them late-night business.

Northern Saw-whet Owls are often active in the fall, when they are migrating to warmer areas for winter. Many fly south, sometimes traveling as far down as Texas. But not all do this: some simply migrate to lesser latitudes for the winter, while others don't move at all but spend the winter in their breeding grounds if food is plentiful and the conditions are favorable. Migrating adults tend to prefer mountain regions, while juveniles often flock to coastlines and migrate later in the season.

Saw-whets are cavity nesters, meaning they move into holes in trees made by woodpeckers or use old squirrel cavities. These holes often exist in dead trees, or snags, and the Northern Saw-whet's reliance on these conditions makes them vulnerable to habitat loss due to logging, development, or well-intentioned removal of dead trees.

Other threats include predation by larger owls and hawks and squirrels who may raid nests, stealing eggs or hatch-

lings. If a nest fails, females may lay a new clutch of eggs that same year, something not all owl species do.

During the nesting season, the female Northern Saw-whet Owl loses feathers along her keel, or breastbone, leaving her skin exposed. This adaptation, called a brood patch, allows her bare skin to transmit heat more readily to the eggs, incubating them at a perfect temperature. Interestingly, Saw-whets utilize incubation in other ways. During winter, if prey is plentiful, they will store prey in an act called caching. Since the prey will typically freeze, when the Saw-whet is ready to eat, it will simply incubate the prey until thawed.

As with all owl species, nesting season is a busy time for both parents. The male must hunt strenuously to feed his growing family as the female incubates the eggs 24/7. For this reason, Northern Saw-whet Owls are normally monogamous, as are 90% of the world's birds. It would be too exhausting for the male to feed two nests at once. While nesting, females may abandon her nest due to human disturbance, loud noises, or predation.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is commonly confused with its relative, the Boreal Owl. The two are easily distinguishable, however, if you know what to look for. Saw-whets have a black bill and a rusty-red tinge to their plumage: the larger Boreal Owl has a light-yellow bill and brownish-gray plumage with a distinctive spotted forehead.

Northern Saw-Whet Research



Our Northern Saw-whet study began in 1981. Since that time we've located over 55 natural nest-sites and a handful of nests in nest boxes. We believe this is the largest sample of natural nest sites in North America. Interestingly, we have documented nests from elevations of 3,000' in cottonwood stands in valley bottoms, through 7,000' in mixed coniferous forests in sub-alpine habitats. The owls appear to be habitat generalist, occurring in all forest types we survey. We are currently in the process of analyzing and writing up our research results, which will have important implications for snag retention policies.

In addition, we conduct a winter roost-site study and fall migration banding of Northern Saw-whet Owls - our 7th autumn at our banding station on the outskirts of Missoula and 9th season overall. Northern Saw-whet Owls are well

known to be highly migratory, and as with many species of owls, numbers fluctuate widely from year to year and place to place. Whether this species is an irruptive migrant responding to changing prey densities, similar to Snowy or Short-eared Owls, is currently unknown. Nonetheless, large scale migrations occur from time to time.

To date we've banded over 1,200 Saw-whet during migration. Most captures (around 80%) are birds in their first year of life; however, a few individuals can be aged up to 3 years old or greater. Recaptures of our previously banded individuals are rare, but offer glimpses of movement patterns overtime. Saw-whets banded in Missoula have been recaptured in California, Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia. We've also recaptured a few birds from banding stations in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWLS AT A GLANCE

HEIGHT

Males: 6.7 - 8.3 in

Females: 6.7 - 8.3 in

WEIGHT

Males: 2.6 oz

Females: 3.5 oz

WINGSPAN, BOTH

18.1 - 22.0 in

POP. ESTIMATE

2,000,000 US & Canada*

**Partners in Flight*

FEEDS ON Mostly deer mice; commonly voles; sometimes small birds and insects



RANGE, LEGEND

 Year-round range

 Nonbreeding

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL FACTS

- Named for monotonous "saw-like" whistling occurring primarily at night
- Females average 25% larger than males
- Have asymmetrical ear openings to allow sound triangulation when hunting
- Size of individuals may increase with latitude increases
- Irruptions occur approximately every 4 years
- Fossils up to 500,000 years old found throughout the United States
- Often pluck feathers from avian prey before consuming
- Eats small birds and mammals, beetles, and/or grasshoppers
- Stores extra food on branches near the nest cavity
- Females choose nest sight



Certificate of Northern Saw-Whet Owl Adoption

This certificate acknowledges that you have symbolically adopted a Northern Saw-whet Owl. This act of generosity and support will help protect this species and its habitats.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Denver W. Holt".

Denver W. Holt
ORI President & Founder



Owl Research Institute
PO Box 39
Charlo, MT 59824
406-644-3412

owlresearchinstitute.org

Dear Northern Saw-whet Owl Supporter,

Thank you for adopting a Northern Saw-whet Owl through the Owl Research Institute! Our work with these birds, both our long-term monitoring and the Montana Migration Project, is funded almost entirely from donations from people like you who care about the future of these incredible owls.

We are so happy you are joining us in making Northern Saw-whet Owl conservation a priority in your life. With rapidly changing habitat, the need is more real than ever before. Your gift to the Owl Research Institute will help our research, education and conservation efforts. Our trusted research data will help to influence land management decisions and preserve critical habitat for North American owls.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch if you have questions about your adoption or our work - which is only possible through the support of dedicated people like you who want to make a difference for generations to come.

Again, thank-you. Working together, we can protect a future for this magnificent species.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Liberty A. DeGrandpre".

Liberty A. DeGrandpre
Development Director

Please note that we are a certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our tax identification number is 81-0453479. No goods or services were exchanged in relation to this donation.

Celebrating 30 years!

Northern
Saw-whet Owl
Aegolius acadicus





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Wildlife conservation through research and education since 1988

Thank you for your support!

Learn more about your Short-eared Owl Adoption at:

<https://www.owlresearchinstitute.org/copy-of-adopt-a-saw-whet-owl-1>