

# Boreal Owl

*Aegolius funereus*

## General Information:

-This small flat-headed owl is seldom seen because it is strictly nocturnal and sits concealed close to the trunk of a thick conifer when on its daytime perch. Its white facial disks are bordered with black. During irruptive flights in winter, when this owl comes far south of its normal winter range into the middle and eastern US, most individuals seem to be females and many are found seeking shelter in buildings. Juveniles are similar to adults on the upper-parts, but they are a rich chocolate brown below with a dark brown facial disk, whitish upturned mustache, and a white wedge between the eyes that spreads above them on the forehead.

## Song:

-Resembles high-pitched ringing *ting, ting, ting, ting*. Brief series of tremulous *hoo* notes.

## Behavior:

-Nocturnal and solitary. Prefers thick old growth coniferous forests. Feeds primarily on small rodents and other small mammals, but rarely on small birds. Males cease singing after they are mated.

## Breeding:

-Polygamous.

## Nesting:

-Incubation of 26-37 days by both sexes. The female feeds the 1 brood per year of semi-altricial young, but the male procures the food, and stay in the nest for 28-36 days.

## Population:

-Uncommon. Northern populations in no danger. The status of western populations is not well known, but the Boreal Owl is vulnerable to logging operations in old growth forests.

## Conservation:

-The Boreal Owl will use manmade nest boxes. Do not shoot hawks or owls!

## Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- If you would like to create an environment friendly to the Boreal Owl on your shoreland property you are going to have to understand that it is an irruptive species, which means that it only comes this far south when the food populations in Canada are extremely low. This food shortage correlates with the fluctuations of the lemming population. Every fourth winter the lemming population hits its low point, which sends these owls into our area. The late winter (January-March) of 2005 will be a good year to see these owls. Therefore the next irruption will come in January of 2009. To attract the Boreal Owl you are going to want to create an environment in which it can find ample food. I suggest planting many conifers, such as Eastern White Pine, Red Pine, Balsam Fir, White Spruce, and Northern White Cedar. Underneath these conifers I would concentrate on Snowberry, Hawthorn, Red-Osier Dogwood, Silky Dogwood, High-bush Cranberry, Winterberry, American and Beaked Hazelnut, Witch Hazel, Staghorn Sumac, Sandbar Willow, Pussy Willow, New Jersey Tea, Ninebark, and Bearberry.

