

MONTANA OWL WORKSHOP

APRIL 22-27, 2010

LEADER: DENVER HOLT

COMPILED BY: DENVER HOLT

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Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

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Leader: Denver holt

Our 2010 Montana Owl Workshop was perhaps our best ever. We recorded eight species of owls and had very good observations of seven species. This workshop is not a birding identification tour, but rather a more science-based approach to the study of owls, and birds in general. In essence, we teach ornithology to our participants, using owls as the medium. Participants joined researchers in the daily routine of trying to locate nesting owls.

Using owls, we discussed avian mating systems; avian migration strategies; avian color, voice, morphology, and physiology; and a host of other questions related to natural selection and the evolution of birds. We further delved into adaptations in owls. How do they hear so well, see so well, fly silently, and camouflage themselves? We discussed the predator-prey relationship between the owls and their prey. Small mammal populations were increasing; consequently, breeding owls were more abundant in 2010.

We observed a female Long-eared Owl quietly incubating eggs on her nest. We then observed the Owl Research Institute team capture the male Long-eared Owl, as part of their 24-year study. They recorded standard biological data on body mass, age, sex, and wing and tail measurements. We discussed the ethics of research and banding, and the value of research. We addressed what researchers do with the results, among other topics.

Some of our observations included a nesting pair of Northern Pygmy-Owls (we watched as the male was mobbed by nuthatches and chickadees); several Great Horned Owls and their young perched on nests; and a Great Gray Owl perched on a fence post—we observed it for an hour from about 100 feet. We had outstanding looks at Short-eared Owls perched at 50 feet, and in both hunting and courtship flights. As always, we checked numerous tree cavities for nesting Northern Saw-whet Owls, and on our last day found two nests. Similarly, and also on our last day, we observed two Boreal Owls at their nests. We had great views as both species peered down from their nest holes.

Although not seen, we heard the distinctive hooting of a Barred Owl on an evening walk. We hiked the base of several cliffs and climbed into several old nest holes looking for evidence of breeding Barn Owls. Unfortunately, our quest for Barn Owls came up short, as this species seems to have disappeared from our study area in 2009 and 2010.

When traveling in between sites looking for owls, we managed to record a total of 92 species of birds, 11 species of mammals, and 1 species of reptile. Highlights for birds included Barrow's Goldeneye, Gray Partridge, Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Black-necked Stilt, Bonaparte's Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Spotted Towhee, and Evening Grosbeak. Highlights for mammals included yellow-pine chipmunk, 3 river otters, and pronghorn.

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	2010
	Ducks, Geese & Swans	Anatidae	
1	Snow Goose	<i>Chen caerulescens</i>	x
2	Cackling Goose	<i>Branta hutchinsii</i>	
3	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	x
4	Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	x
5	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	x
6	American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	x
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	x
8	Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	
9	Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>	x
10	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	x
11	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	x
12	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	x
13	Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	x
14	Redhead	<i>Aythya americana</i>	x
15	Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	x
16	Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	x
17	Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	
18	Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	x
19	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	x
20	Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	x
21	Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	x
22	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	x
23	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	
24	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	
	Pheasants, Partridges, Grouse	Phasianidae	
25	Gray Partridge (I)	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	x
26	Ring-necked Pheasant (I)	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	x
27	Ruffed Grouse	<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>	
28	Spruce Grouse	<i>Falcapennis canadensis</i>	
29	Dusky Grouse	<i>Dendragapus obscurus</i>	
30	Sharp-tailed Grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>	
	Loons	Gaviidae	
31	Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	x
	Grebes	Podicipedidae	
32	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	
33	Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	x
34	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	x
35	Eared Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	x
36	Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>	x
37	Clark's Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>	
	Pelicans	Pelecanidae	
38	American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	x

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	2010
	Cormorants	Phalacrocoracidae	
39	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	x
	Herons, Egrets & Bitterns	Ardeidae	
40	American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	
41	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	x
42	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	
43	Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	
	Ibises & Spoonbills	Threskiornithidae	
44	White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	
	New World Vultures	Cathartidae	
45	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	x
	Hawks, Eagles & Kites	Accipitridae	
46	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	x
47	Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	x
48	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	x
49	Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	
50	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	
51	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	
52	Swainson's Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	x
53	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	x
54	Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	
55	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	x
	Falcons & Caracaras	Falconidae	
56	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	x
57	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	x
58	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	
59	Prairie Falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	
	Rails, Gallinules & Coots	Rallidae	
60	Virginia Rail	<i>Rallus limicola</i>	
61	Sora	<i>Porzana carolina</i>	
62	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	x
	Cranes	Gruidae	
63	Sandhill Crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>	x
	Plovers & Lapwings	Charadriidae	
64	Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	
65	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	
66	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	x

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	Avocets & Stilts	Recurvirostridae	
67	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	x
68	American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	
	Sandpipers & Allies	Scolopacidae	
69	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	
70	Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>	
71	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	
72	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	
73	Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	
74	Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	
75	Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	
76	Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	
77	Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	
78	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	
79	Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	
80	Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	
81	Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	
82	Wilson's Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>	x
83	Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	
84	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	
	Gulls & Terns	Laridae	
85	Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>	x
86	Franklin's Gull	<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>	
87	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	x
88	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	
89	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	
90	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	
91	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	
92	Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	
	Doves & Pigeons	Columbidae	
93	Rock Pigeon (I)	<i>Columba livia</i>	x
94	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	x
	Owls	Strigidae	
95	Western Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops kennicottii</i>	
96	Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	x
97	Northern Pygmy-Owl	<i>Glaucidium gnoma</i>	x
98	Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	
99	Great Gray Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>	x
100	Barred Owl	<i>Strix Varia</i>	h
101	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	x
102	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	x
103	Boreal Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	x
104	Northern Saw-whet Owl	<i>Aegolius acadicus</i>	x

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	Nightjars & Allies	Caprimulgidae	
105	Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	
	Swifts	Apodidae	
106	Black Swift	<i>Cypseloides niger</i>	
107	Vaux's Swift	<i>Chaetura vauxi</i>	
108	White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	
	Hummingbirds	Trochilidae	
109	Calliope Hummingbird	<i>Stellula calliope</i>	
110	Rufous Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	
	Woodpeckers & Allies	Picidae	
111	Lewis's Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	
112	Red-naped Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>	x
113	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	x
114	Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>	
115	American 3-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides dorsalis</i>	
116	Black-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides arcticus</i>	
117	Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	x
118	Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	x
	Tyrant Flycatchers	Tyrannidae	
119	Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	
120	Western Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>	
121	Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>	
122	Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>	
123	Hammond's Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax hammondii</i>	
124	Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax oberholseri</i>	
125	Cordilleran Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax occidentalis</i>	
126	Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	
127	Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	
128	Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	
	Shrikes	Laniidae	
129	Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	
	Vireos & Allies	Vireonidae	
130	Cassin's Vireo	<i>Vireo cassinii</i>	
131	Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>	
132	Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	
	Crows, Jays & Magpies	Corvidae	
133	Gray Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	x
134	Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	x
135	Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	
136	Clark's Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>	x
137	Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>	x

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	2010
138	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	x
139	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	x
	Larks	Alaudidae	
140	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	
	Swallows	Hirundinidae	
141	Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	x
142	Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	x
143	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	
144	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	
145	Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	
146	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	
	Chickadees & Tits	Paridae	
147	Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	x
148	Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>	x
	Nuthatches	Sittidae	
149	Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	x
150	White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	x
151	Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	x
	Creepers	Certhiidae	
152	Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	
	Wrens	Troglodytidae	
153	Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	
154	House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	
155	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	
156	Marsh Wren	<i>Cistothorus palustris</i>	x
	Dippers	Cinclidae	
157	American Dipper	<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>	
	Kinglets	Regulidae	
158	Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>	
159	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>	x
	Thrushes & Allies	Turdidae	
160	Mountain Bluebird	<i>Sialia currucoides</i>	x
161	Townsend's Solitaire	<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>	
162	Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	
163	Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	
164	American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	x
165	Varied Thrush	<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>	

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	2010
	Mockingbirds & Thrashers	Mimidae	
166	Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	
167	Sage Thrasher	<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>	
	Starlings	Sturnidae	
168	European Starling (I)	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	x
	Wagtails & Pipits	Motacillidae	
169	American Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	
170	Sprague's Pipit	<i>Anthus spragueii</i>	
	Waxwings	Bombycillidae	
171	Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	
	New World Warblers	Parulidae	
172	Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Vermivora celata</i>	
173	Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>	
174	Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	x
175	Townsend's Warbler	<i>Dendroica townsendi</i>	
176	American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	
177	Northern Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	
178	MacGillivray's Warbler	<i>Oporornis tolmiei</i>	
179	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	
180	Wilson's Warbler	<i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>	
	Buntings & Sparrows	Emberizidae	
181	Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	x
182	Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	
183	Clay-colored Sparrow	<i>Spizella pallida</i>	
184	Brewer's Sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>	
185	Vesper Sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>	x
186	Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	
187	Lark Bunting	<i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i>	
188	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	x
189	Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>	
190	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	x
191	Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolnii</i>	
192	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	
193	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	x
194	McCown's Longspur	<i>Calcarius mccownii</i>	
195	Chestnut-collared Longspur	<i>Calcarius ornatus</i>	
	Cardinals & Allies	Cardinalidae	
196	Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>	
197	Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>	
198	Lazuli Bunting	<i>Passerina amoena</i>	

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	Troupials & Allies	Icteridae	
199	Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	
200	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	x
201	Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	x
202	Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthoceph.</i>	x
203	Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	x
204	Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	
205	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	
206	Bullock's Oriole	<i>Icterus bullockii</i>	
	Siskins, Crossbills & Allies	Fringillidae	
207	Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	<i>Leucosticte tephrocotis</i>	
208	Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	
209	Cassin's Finch	<i>Carpodacus cassinii</i>	
210	House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	x
211	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	
212	Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>	
213	American Goldfinch	<i>Spinus tristis</i>	
214	Evening Grosbeak	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	x
	Old World Sparrows	Passeridae	
215	House Sparrow (I)	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	x
	Trumpeter Swan		x
	Greater Scaup		x
	Eurasian Collared Dove		x
	MAMMALS		
	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	
	Squirrels	Sciuridae	
	Hoary Marmot	<i>Marmota caligula</i>	
	Yellow-bellied Marmot	<i>Marmota flaviventris</i>	
	Red-tailed Chipmunk	<i>Eutamias ruficaudus</i>	
	Least Chipmunk	<i>Eutamias minimus</i>	
	Yellow-pine Chipmunk	<i>Eutamias amoenus</i>	x
	Richardson's Ground Squirrel	<i>Citellus richardsoni</i>	
	Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	<i>Citellus lateralis</i>	x
	Columbian Ground Squirrel	<i>Citellus columbianus</i>	x
	Red Squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>	x
	Fox Squirrel	<i>Sciurus niger</i>	
	Weasels, Skunks	Mustelidae	
	American Marten	<i>Martes americana</i>	
	Long-tailed Weasel	<i>Mustela frenata</i>	
	Short-tailed Weasel	<i>Mustela erminea</i>	
	River Otter	<i>Lutra canadensis</i>	x
	Striped Skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>	

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	2010
	Mice, Rats, Voles, Lemmings	Cricetidae	
	Muskrat	<i>Odonatra zibethica</i>	x
	Beaver	Castoridae	
	Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>	
	Hares & Rabbits	Leporidae	
	Mountain Cottontail	<i>Silvilagus nuttalli</i>	
	White-tailed Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus townsendi</i>	
	Snowshoe Hare	<i>Lepus americanus</i>	
	Raccoons	Procyonidae	
	Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>	
	Porcupine	Erithozontidae	
	Porcupine	<i>Erithizon dorsatum</i>	
	Bears	Ursidae	
	Black Bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>	
	Grizzly Bear	<i>Ursus horribilis</i>	
	Cats	Felidae	
	Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	
	Mountain Lion	<i>Felis concolor</i>	
	Dogs	Canidae	
	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes (vulpes) fulva</i>	
	Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	
	Pronghorn	Antilocapridae	
	Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>	x
	Deer	Cervidae	
	Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	x
	White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	x
	Sheep, Goats Cattle	Bovidae	
	Mountain Goat	<i>Oreamnos americanus</i>	
	Bighorn Sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis</i>	x
	American Bison	<i>Bison bison</i>	x
	Painted Turtle		x