Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Printed: 08/26/93

Great Gray Owl

1860

Record Number: 81-FW

Classification: NA

Hillsboro, Van Buren Co., IA Walter G. Savage

Anderson 1907

REFERENCE

Anderson 1907

VOTE (1981): 1-III, 1-IV, 5-V

V, no description. V, few/no details.

IV, Bird shot -- no specimen, no description.

V, no details, although may be IV -- somewhat persuasively written.

Anderson 1907 pp 261-262 164. (370). Scotiaptex nebulosa (Forster). Great Gray Owl.

The Great Gray Owl is a resident of the far north and only occurs in Iowa as a casual straggler in winter. It was listed by J. A. Allen in White's Geology of Iowa, 1870 (p. 424), and it has been "reported on Dec. 17, 1893, near Omaha, by I. S. Trostler" (Rev. Bds. Neb., 55). T. M. Trippe records (Proc. Bost. Soc., xv, 1872, 233): "Syrnium cinereum. A very large bird was killed at Oskaloosa, in Mahaska county, which, from the description given me by the person who shot it, must have been this species."

Walter G. Savage writes from Hillsboro, Van Buren county:

"In 1860 my father shot one. I have not known them to occur since. There is no mistake in this owl. My father shot it in a tree standing in our dooryard one night, and it was nothing else but a Great Gray Owl." David L. Savage, writing in 1894, says: "A friend in Van Buren county shot a Great Gray Owl a few winters ago. This is the only time I ever heard of this species being found in Iowa, but the identity is certain."

Bent, A. C.:Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey (Part 2). Bull 170 US Nat Museum, Washington, 1938. p 219

> Casual records. - Great gray owls have many times been taken or observed in winter south of what seems to be their normal range. Among these records are the following: One reported as seen on the Humber River, Newfoundland, on August 28, 1899. One taken-at-Stratford, Conn., on January 6, 1843; another taken at North Haven in March 1907, while a third was reported as seen near the latter point on February 4, 1934. In 1887 one was recorded as having been shot near Mendham, N. J., "many years ago", and another was reported to have been killed in Sussex County in December 1859. One was reported as found in the smokestack of a steamboat at Eric, Pa., about 1900. There are two incomplete records for Clark County, Ohio, and an unsatisfactory record for Huntsburg. A specimen was taken near Fowler, Ind., during the winter of 1897, and another was collected at Hoveys Lake, Posey County, "some years before 1913." One was taken at Hillsboro, Iowa, in 1860, and another was captured alive at Sigourney on April 25, 1921. A specimen was taken at Omaha, Nebr., on December 17, 1893. There are a few records for Yellowstone National Park, Wyo., and one was collected at Wells in April 1899. In southern Idaho a speciman was taken in December 1910 at St. Anthony. One was taken at McCloud, Calif., on September 26, 1913, while there are three records from Quincy, one being a specimen collected on May 12, 1894.

Closely allied races of this owl are found in northern Europe and

Asia.

202

27. SCOTIAPTEX NEBULOSA NEBULOSA(J. R. Forster), 370.

Great Gray Owl.

Field Characters.—The largest owl without car-tufts in the state. The Dark grayish in general color, with yellow eyes. Very rare.

Description.—Above, dusky, mottled with white; feathers about the eyes gray, with black concentric rings. Below, white and streaked on breast, and barred and streaked on sides with dusk postered and legs with long, hairlike feathers; eyes and bill yellow Size very large. No ear-tufts.

Measurements.—Length, 26 to 28 inches; wing, 17 to 18 inches; tail, about 12 inches.

Range.—Boreal North America. Breeds from northern tree limit in central Alaska and northwestern Mackenzie, south to central Canadian provinces. Winters southward to northern United States, straggling to Iowa, Indiana and Ohio.

The Great Gray Owl is without doubt, in apparent size, if not by actual weight, the largest of our Iowa owls. It is a rare straggler from the north, and authentic records of its occurrence are very few. If the bird is in hand, it is not easily mistaken for the Barred Owl, which it most resembles. Its size, however, relatively small feet, and above all its yellow eyes, are in marked contrast to the smaller dimensions, comparatively larger feet, and dark eyes of the Barred Owl. The writer has purchased two specimens of this bird which were taken near Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the autumn of 1913, but has been unable to discover any specimens actually collected in Iowa.

R. M. Anderson notes that it is recorded by J. A. Allen (White's Geology of Iowa, Vol. 2, p. 424, 1870), and by I. S. Trostler on December 17, 1893, near Omaha (Rev. Bds. Neb., p. 55); also by T. M. Trippe near Oskaloosa in Mahaska county (Proc. Bost. Soc., XV., p. 233, 1872). He also records that Walter G. Savage reported one killed by his father in 1860 near Hillsboro, Van Buren county, and "David L. Savage writing in 1894 says 'a friend in Van Buren county shot a Great Gray Owl a few winters ago."

The species is looked upon as one that is not successful in the struggle for existence and that is decreasing in numbers.

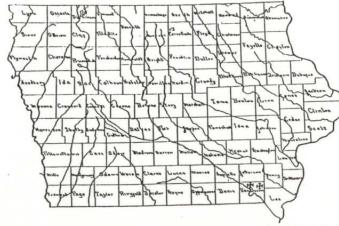


Fig. 82 .- Map showing the distribution in Iowa of the Great Gray Owl.

Scotlaptex nebulosa nebulosa (J. R. Forster).

*Allen, J. A., Catalogue of the Birds of Iowa: Geology of Iowa, White, Vol. 2, App. B, p. 424, 1870.

*Trippe, T. M., Notes on the Birds of Southern Iowa: Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History, Vol. 15, p. 233, 1872. (Mahaska County.)

Warren, B. H., Birds of Pennsylvania, p. 238, 1888.

Ridgway, R., Ornithology of Illinois, p. 410, 1889.

Hatch, Dr. P. L., Birds of Minnesota, p. 211, 1892.

Bendire, Capt. Chas., Life Histories of North American Birds, p. 345, 1892.

Fisher, A. K., Hawks and Owls of the U. S., p. 157, 1893.

Woodruff, F. M., Birds of the Chicago Area, p. 103, 1907.

Anderson, R. M., Birds of Iowa, p. 261, 1907.

Widmann, Otto, A Preliminary Catalogue of the Birds of Missouri: Trans. Acad. Sci., St. Louis, pp. 107, 108, 1907.

Cory, C. B., Birds of Illinois and Wisconsin, p. 490, 1909.

Bruner, L., Wolcott, R. H., Swenk, M. H., A Preliminary Review of the Birds of Nebraska, p. 55, 1909.

A. O. U. Check-List, p. 171, 1910.

Chapman, F. M., Birds of Eastern North America, p. 312, 1912.

Ridgway, R., Birds of North and Middle America, Part VI, Bulletin 50, U. S. Nat. Mus., p. 635, 1914.