

## ROUND TABLE NOTES

FIRST RECORD OF SNOWY OWL IN STEWART COUNTY, TENNESSEE — While crossing the bridge over the Cumberland River at Dover, Stewart County, Tennessee, at 0726 on 5 January 1987, I saw a large, pale-white bird flying over a large cornfield within the Barkley Wildlife Management Area (WMA) just northwest of the bridge. The deep, slow and deliberate wing beats of the bird at first suggested a large larid, but as I drew closer the bird's flight and body shape became more reminiscent of a raptor, causing me to speculate that it might be an albino hawk. The bird and I crossed paths as I neared the end of the bridge, however, and it was at this time that I noticed the distinctive, cigar-shaped body typical of an owl.

Suspicious that I had just observed a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*), I immediately recrossed the bridge and found the bird at 0728 perched atop the new westbound lane of the bridge which was currently under construction. From a distance of about 9 m I noted the field marks which follow. The base color of the bird's entire plumage was white. On this base color, dark, horizontal barring/spotting was evident in the tail, the back, the crown (not including the forehead which was all white) and the underparts (not including the throat area). The dark, horizontal barring on the underparts, which reminded me somewhat of an adult male Peregrine Falcon's (*Falco peregrinus*) underparts, was conspicuously heavy and would therefore imply that this individual was an immature bird. Dark spotting was also present on the wings.

The bill was short, hooked and dark. The iris color was bright yellow. The facial disk, upper chest and throat areas were predominantly white. No "ear tufts" were present. The feathering on the legs, which extended down to the talons, was also predominantly white. When perched, the owl sat at a forward angle (not vertical as in most hawks) with its stomach resting on its toes. The bird took to the air at 0730 and began circling over the river, heading in a general southeastward direction.

Many Nashville area observers attempted to find the Snowy Owl during the next 2 days without success. However, on 20 January, I was contacted by a refuge volunteer who informed me that a waterfowl hunter had observed a "large, white bird" between 2 hunting blinds within the Barkley WMA over a period of 2 weeks ending 18 January. I alerted several Nashville birders and shortly after sunrise on 24 January Jerry Drewry, Maxey Irwin and Kinian Cosner relocated the owl. The bird disappeared shortly thereafter, causing dismay to the growing number of birders who were arriving in response to the report of the owl's rediscovery. Donald Blunk, a local birder who is completely familiar with the terrain of the Barkley WMA, arrived early that afternoon and within an hour was able to locate the owl at its roosting site: a large brush pile in the middle of one of the management area's larger impoundments.

The owl spent the great majority of its time at this roost or hunting over the surrounding impoundments and corn fields. It was frequently active during daylight hours and was seen almost daily from 24 January to 6 February by well over 125 birders, sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts. I know of no sightings after 6 February. Mark Gudlin, a wildlife biologist with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and I took a boat to the owl's

roost on 13 February and collected 3 sets of American Coot (*Fulica americana*) wings and 2 owl pellets the dimensions of which are as follows: 56x34x26 mm and 80x32x26 mm. David Vogt collected an additional 4 pellets on 24 January. The 13 February pellets were analyzed by Dr. David H. Snyder, Professor of Biology at Austin Peay State University. These 2 pellets were judged to represent the remains of a Pied-billed Grebe (*Podylimbus podiceps*).

Pellets found on 24 January were analyzed by Paul W. Parmalee, Professor and Director of the McClung Museum at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Remains of an American Coot were divided between 3 of the pellets; skeletal remains of a prairie vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*) were divided between 2 of the pellets; and a section of furculum from a duck the size and proportion of a Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) was found in one of the pellets. These findings are supported by Wallace Todd's observation in late January of the Snowy Owl catching and consuming an American Coot.

The Snowy Owl is a very infrequent visitor to Tennessee with only 8 substantiated sightings through January 1961 (Bierly, M.L. 1980. *Bird Finding in Tennessee*. M.L. Bierly, Nashville). The sighting described by this note represents the ninth state record and the first Snowy Owl seen in the state in 26 years. The species has previously been recorded at Reelfoot Lake, Nashville, Johnson City, near Paris (2 sightings), near Paris Landing at Kentucky Lake, along the White/Cumberland County line and in Sullivan County. There are no previous records for Stewart County. It should be noted that Powell (*Amer. Birds* 41(2):285) summarized the 1986-87 winter season in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan as "the best Snowy Owl winter in at least 5 years." I am indebted to David H. Snyder, Paul W. Parmalee, Mark Gudlin and David F. Vogt for the assistance and contributions which they so graciously provided.

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**CATTLE EGRETS NEST IN SUMNER COUNTY** — Nests of Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) in Tennessee have been infrequently reported, particularly east of the Mississippi River floodplain. Thus, the nesting of this species in a colony of Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) in Sumner County during 1987 warrants description.

On 3 July 1987 at 1455 (CDT) I watched with Barbara H. Stedman, Dot T. Crawford, and J. Paul Crawford as a Cattle Egret flew into a Black-crowned Night-Heron colony located on a small island in Old Hickory Lake 250 m offshore from the coal loading docks of the Gallatin Steam Plant; J.P. Crawford saw another Cattle Egret enter the rookery shortly thereafter. Both birds returned to view 2 minutes later; one flew off to the north, while the other perched in view and preened for 2-3 minutes before also flying northward. Since this bird displayed the buffy patches on back and breast characteristic of breeding adults, we surmised that these birds were nesting in the colony and decided to return with a boat to search the island for a nest.

On 6 July 1987 at 1345 J.P. Crawford and I searched the dense, deciduous trees on the island for a Cattle Egret nest. We saw an adult Cattle Egret (Figure 1) perched in the area where an adult had perched on 3 July 1987. A