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Spring Owl Banding at the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Michigan, From 1981 to 1990.

Part 3: Recoveries, Foreign Retraps

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INTRODUCTION

The Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) is located at the tip of Whitefish Point in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. WPBO was formed in 1979 with owl research one of its primary goals. In two previous papers (Grigg 1991a, 1991b), I described the standardized banding methods and results of the owl banding program during spring at WPBO between 1982 and 1990. This paper presents data on recovery and foreign retraps for owls during this same period and also includes earlier information from owl banding at Whitefish Point from 1966 (Kelley and Roberts 1971).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Bird Banding Laboratory, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provided information on WPBO-banded owls encountered elsewhere and foreign banded owls recaptured at WPBO for the period from 1966 to March 1991. These data from the Bird Banding Laboratory include 25 owls of 4 species that were encountered elsewhere and 10 owls of 3 species that were banded elsewhere and recaptured at WPBO (Table 1). The owl banding program at WPBO banded 1494 owls between 1981 and 1990 (Grigg 1991a) and, of this number, 13 birds of 3 species were recovered elsewhere. This is a 0.87% recovery rate, similar to the 0.67% recovery rate reported by Carpenter et al. (1990) for Sharp-shinned Hawks (*Accipiter striatus*) banded at Whitefish Point between 1956 and 1987. Holroyd and Woods (1975) calculated a 0.77% recovery rate for Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) banded in North America before 1970.

Nine of the 10 Northern Saw-whet Owl recoveries

occurred in fall or early winter, and all were along or near one of the Great Lakes (Fig. 1). Four of them occurred south and west of WPBO along the west shore of Lake Michigan, and five occurred south and east along the northeast shore of Lake Huron (1 bird), along the north shore of Lake Erie (2 birds), the north shore of Lake Ontario (1 bird), and in northeastern Ohio (1 bird). Four of these recoveries were made by other bird banders; the other five were of birds found dead. The lone spring recovery was of a bird banded on 22 April 1986 and recovered at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on 24 April 1988. This owl had been observed near a backyard feeder for several days before being found dead, presumably starved.

The eight foreign retraps of Northern Saw-whet Owls made at WPBO all were of fall birds banded along the Great Lakes (Fig. 2). Six of them originated from Wisconsin and two had been banded at the Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario. Seven of these owls were recaptured at WPBO the spring following banding, and one was recaptured the second spring after banding.

In contrast to the recoveries of Northern Saw-whet Owls, the 10 recoveries of Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*) were distributed throughout all seasons. Two of the three spring recoveries occurred within the same season the bird had been banded. Both birds continued their spring migration past WPBO by flying to the south and west. One was killed on a highway near Manistique, Michigan. The other was banded on 22 April 1975 and found dead 48 km west of Green Bay, Wisconsin, on 2 May. This bird travelled 370 km in 11 nights before impaling

itself on a barbed wire fence and dying. The third spring recovery was of a bird found dead near St. Raymond Portneuf, Quebec, on 17 April 1988. This Long-eared Owl had been banded at WPBO on 10 May 1985. Perhaps this bird was following the south shoreline of Lake Erie and Ontario and then the St. Lawrence River system back to the breeding area during this season, rather than using a more westerly route to pass by WPBO again. The three summer recoveries of Long-eared Owls were made east of WPBO, and within the summer breeding range (Godfrey 1986). One bird had been banded on 20 May 1966 and was shot in June 1968 at La Sarre, Quebec, a distance of 500 km northeast of WPBO. The other two recoveries were of birds found dead one and two years after banding at Verner, Ontario, and Parry Sound, Ontario, respectively. The lone fall recovery was banded at WPBO on 1 May 1988 and found dead near Brainard, Minnesota, on 18 November 1988. There were three recoveries of Long-eared Owl during winter: two owls southwest of WPBO in Wisconsin and the other owl from Tupelo, Mississippi. All three were birds found dead within three years of banding. The one foreign retrap Long-eared Owl was banded near Port Washington, Wisconsin, on 15 October 1974 and recaptured at WPBO on 29 April 1976.

Presumably due to the northerly distribution of Great Gray Owls (*Strix nebulosa*) and Boreal Owls (*Aegolius funereus*), there have been no recoveries or foreign retraps at WPBO. These two species do not occur regularly around the populated areas in the United States and Canada, where recoveries would more likely be made.

Two Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) banded at WPBO have been recovered elsewhere. One was banded on 5 May 1979 at WPBO and recovered in mid-November 1981, 72 km north of Thessalon, Ontario. The owl had been observed for several days along a trap line set for pine martens (*Martes americana*) before becoming trapped and dying. The other recovery was of a bird found dead near Newberry, Michigan, in the same year in which it was banded.

Three WPBO-banded Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) have been recovered. One was found dead two winters after banding at the north side of the Soo Locks in Ontario. The other winter recovery had been banded on 24 April 1975 and was shot at Fishing River, Quebec, in January 1980. This recovery location is about 777 km northeast of WPBO on the east shore of James Bay. The third

recovery was made near Geraldton, Ontario, 18 months after being banded at WPBO. The lone foreign retrap of a Great Horned Owl at WPBO was of a bird banded on 23 November 1982 near Arnold, Minnesota, and later recaptured at WPBO on 6 May 1984.

Table 2 shows some of the hazards owls face. The primary causes of man-related mortality are being shot and colliding with motor vehicles. Most recoveries of owls were of birds found dead from various causes (80%); the remaining recoveries of live birds (all Northern Saw-whet Owls) were made by bird banders.

The geographical importance of the Great Lakes in influencing the leading lines of migration is shown by the 15 recoveries made along or near the Great Lakes system. All of these were made during the spring and fall migration. Additionally, the 10 foreign retraps of owls made at WPBO were of birds banded during fall migration, with nine of the 10 birds originally banded near the Great Lakes.

The data obtained from recoveries of WPBO owls and foreign retraps of owls made at WPBO provide information on nesting and wintering areas and migration routes used by these nocturnal migrants. The owl banding program at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory will continue to monitor owl populations and add to the knowledge of owl migration past this site.

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Table 1. Recoveries of WPBO owls and foreign recaptures of owls made at WPBO.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Total Banded</u>	<u>Number of Recoveries</u>	<u>Number of Foreign Recaptures</u>
Long-eared Owl	427	10	1
Barred Owl	79	2	0
No. Saw-whet Owl	575	10	8
Great Horned Owl	84	3	1

Table 2. How the recoveries of WPBO owls were made.

<u>How Obtained</u>	<u>LEOW</u>	<u>BAOW</u>	<u>NSWO</u>	<u>GHOW</u>	<u>Total</u>
Found dead	7	-	3	1	11
Shot	1	-	-	1	2
Caught due to injury	-	-	-	1	1
Caught in mammal trap	-	1	-	-	1
Struck by car	-	-	1	-	1
Found dead on highway	1	1	1	-	3
Caught in fence	1	-	-	-	1
Caught by bander	-	-	5	-	5
Total Recoveries	10	2	10	3	25

LEOW = Long-eared Owl, BAOW = Barred Owl

NSWO = Northern Saw-whet Owl, GHOW = Great Horned Owl

Fig. 1. Recoveries of Northern Saw-whet Owls banded during spring at WPBO. Circles represent recoveries made in autumn, squares in winter, and triangles in spring.

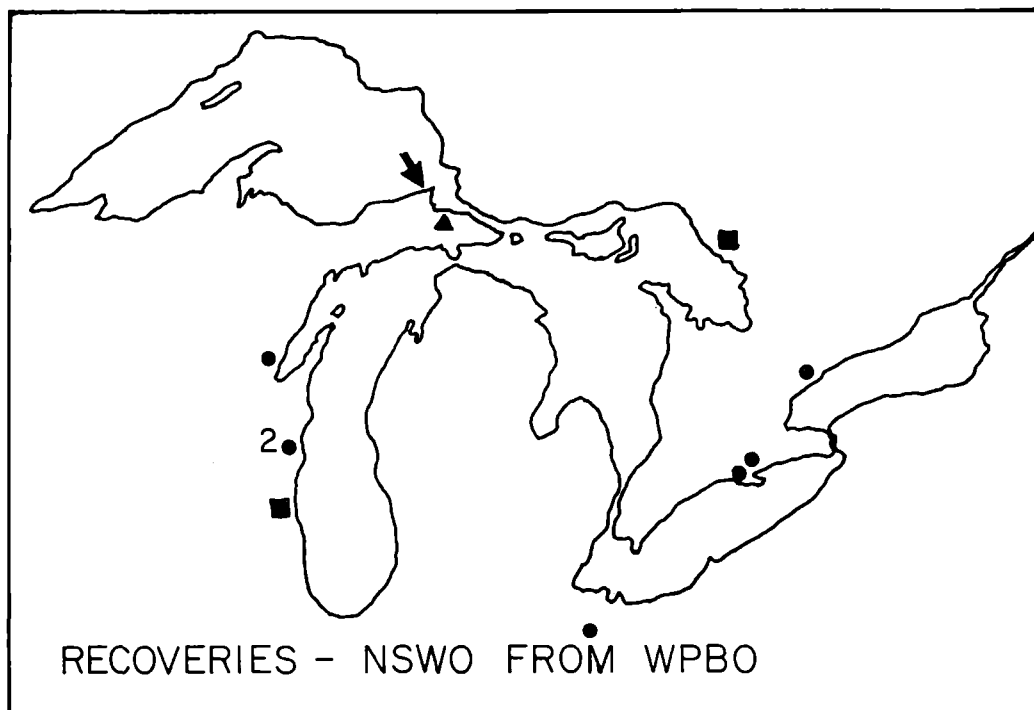


Fig. 2. Foreign recaptures of Northern Saw-whet Owls made at WPBO during spring. Numbers indicate that more than one owl was recaptured from that banding site.

