

Owls in Winter

February 16, 2019

Our traditional trip into Upper Michigan to search for winter birds was on February 16, 2019, a beautiful and sunny but cold day.

Upper Michigan is a favorite destination for birds in winter because they seem to find excellent habitat in the farmland that is abundant in this area. Owls often perch on poles or fences and are easily seen.

Before we left the Michigan Welcome Center, the Birding Hotlines had reported a Hawk Owl, just south of Sault Ste Marie, Michigan. This bird is a very unusual visitor from the far north, and finding him/her was our first goal.

Not long after we left, we spotted the Hawk Owl, sitting on top of a tree, but quite far away. Rene Wysynski's was able to get a long distance photo which gave us a good view, even though it was a long way away.



Good job Rene and thank you.

However, in order to see and appreciate the beauty of this owl, I am including a close-up picture taken later but showing why birders pursue this bird. Look at those eyes!!

This picture, taken by Waabishka Miimki, a day later at the same place, illustrates the beauty of these birds. Thank you to Waabishka Miimki for this wonderful picture.





Traditionally, of course, we want to find Snowy Owls on this trip, also from the far north, but they seem to like the hay fields in the Rudyard / Pickford area of Northern Michigan in winter.

Usually we see many owls on this trip, often 15 or 20 sometimes even higher. But this year for some reason we only saw three of these northern beauties. No matter, this wonderful picture taken by Rene Wysynski illustrates why we pursue these birds.



Standing by the road, gawking at the top of the hydro pole, we enjoyed the pleasure of watching this bird on a cold sunny day in Northern Michigan.



This is the third and last Snowy Owl on this trip, taken by Val Walker.



We did see other birds, including Pine Grosbeaks, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Chickadees. It was a good day for winter birds.

Dave Euler



White-breasted Nuthatch by Rene Wysynski