

Bald Eagle was actually fledged at the Robert S. Kerr Reservoir in the spring of 1978.

RAMMIS COURT 'E', SALLISAW, OKLAHOMA 74955. 15 AUGUST 1978.

A SNOWY OWL AT OKLAHOMA CITY'S AIRPORT

BY WESLEY S. ISAACS

During the winter of 1976-77 a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) lived at the Will Rogers airport in the southwestern part of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma. I watched the bird on several occasions between 4 December and 23 February. Habitually it spent several daylight hours (from about 1000 to 1630) at one of two spots on the ground. At these spots I picked up a total of eight pellets, each of which contained fur and bones of Hispid Cotton Rats (*Sigmodon hispidus*) chiefly. The owl was conspicuous when on a fencepost or another of its favorite perches, a shaded lamp about 30 feet above ground along one edge of the airport.

When I first saw the owl, at 1400 on 4 December, it was on the ground at one of the two spots above mentioned. At 0605 on 16 December I could see it fairly well despite the semi-darkness. It was perched on one of the posts of a chain-link fence whose woven wire extended downward to within a foot of the ground. About 25 feet away, under the same fence, crouched a Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*). Even as I watched, the owl tried to catch the rabbit, which



SNOWY OWL SWALLOWING COTTON RAT

Photographed by Wesley S. Isaacs at the Oklahoma City airport on 10 February 1977. The owl swallowed the rat whole.

did not run off when attacked, but merely moved to the other side of the fence. The foiled owl alighted on the fence directly above the rabbit. About five minutes later the rabbit hopped off into the darkness, keeping under the fence as long as I could see it. The owl did not follow it.

At about 1615 on 24 January 1977 (my son Kevin was with me), I again saw the owl try to catch a jackrabbit. The owl was perched on the shaded lamp referred to above and the rabbit was under the fence. When the owl swooped, the rabbit hopped to the other side of the fence. The owl alighted on the fence above the rabbit. There the owl stayed for about ten minutes. The rabbit now dashed straight away from the fence, with the owl after it. Just as the owl was about to pounce, the rabbit made a sharp left turn, evading its pursuer. The owl circled, swooped again, but missed when the rabbit made another sharp left turn. The rabbit now ran back to the fence, followed by the owl, which alighted above its intended prey. Presently the rabbit left the fence again, and again the owl gave chase and swooped — but in vain. This time the owl returned not to the fence but to the shaded light, where it settled down, presumably to watch for smaller prey.

On 25 January, following the suggestion of Warren D. Harden, I tried to lure the owl into a trap baited with a live Common Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*). I wanted to band the owl. At 1615 I placed the trap in short grass about 100 yards from the owl, which was perched on the fence. Hardly had I got back to my car when the owl flew to the hamster; but all it did when it got there was sit by the trap and look at the rodent. After watching the hamster for about five minutes it regurgitated a pellet and flew off. I collected the pellet.

On 26 January John Shackford and I tied the hamster outside the trap, hoping that the owl, which was about 100 yards away, would take it. So far as we could tell, the owl ignored the hamster completely. We tried three times that day to catch the owl in this way, but failed.

Early in the morning on 10 February the owl was on its lamp-post perch as I stopped my car at the side of the road. Between the car and a parking lot a few rods off was a grassy stretch that was free of snow. Even as I watched the owl, it flew down, caught a Cotton Rat, and swallowed the apparently full grown animal whole right in front of me (see photo).

On 12 February, at 0725, I saw the owl drive off a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) that had alighted on the chain-link fence. Throughout the period of the owl's stay, I often saw large hawks, chiefly red-tails, in the vicinity, but not at the airport itself.

394 LAFAYETTE DRIVE, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73119, 23 FEBRUARY 1977

GENERAL NOTES

Early nesting of Great Horned Owl in Oklahoma.—On 16 January 1975 I flushed a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) from a clutch of four eggs in a nest that had been used the preceding spring by Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*). The nest was 42 feet up in a large elm about 3 miles northwest of Cyril, Caddo County, southwestern Oklahoma. In 1974 I had found four Great Horned Owl eggs in a tree-cavity nest only about