

Species: BOREAL OWL  
(Vernacular name)(*Aegolius funereus*) [A]  
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 3/16/84 28°F estm. Time Bird Seen: 9:55 pm to 10:20 pm  
Locality: NEAR Slumgullion Pass (observed 2 birds) Lake City, Hinsdale County- COLO.  
NPAK Spring Creek Pass (heard 1 bird) " " " - COLO.  
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: EYESIGHTIf photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: —

Number of birds seen: 2 Sex: UNKNOWN Plumage: ADULTS  
Light conditions: FULL MOON, NO WINDS, FLASHLITE (LARGE square battery type)  
Distance from bird, and how measured: 15-18' ESTIMATED

Describe the bird's overall behavior: I will just describe the 2 observed birds behavior.  
First bird responded to tape. I approached tree, shone light upon snag... about 35' up in snag saw boreal owl... BIRD looked at me for 10 seconds + flew to the south. Played tape again, and another bird flew into lower branches of Engelmann spruce. Shone light on bird... adult Boreal owl was dead perched about 15-18' away. He perched there for the next 20 minutes. Sometimes he would walk up the branch occasionally moving his head from side to side. I left after noting all the features of the bird.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the birds: Old growth *Picea engelmannii* and some *Abies lasiocarpa* about 70-80 feet tall. Snags present also.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):  
None on this trip.



Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field.

This description is taken from a tape made minutes after observations:

Dark border of facial disc, inside disc lighter... yellow eyes (dark pupil)... white eyebrow appearance, spots barely visible in dark area on forehead... light gray undertail coverts, tail brownish gray; length 8-10 inches; bill light overall; diffuse (watered down) streaking on breast; white spots on shoulders (brown); some white spots on folded brown secondaries.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

CALL WAS the typical 12-15 hollow too too too... crescendoing and decrescendoing in loudness, and rising slightly in scale. It is the same sound that only 2 weeks or so earlier, that David Palmer and I chased after on 2 miles at Cameron Pass, COLO. Also heard saw-whets in lower elevations of Poudre Canyon near his CABIN.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

SAW-WHET OWL: I have photographed these many times. These owls lack the dark border on the facial disc. Call is different.

NORTHERN PYGMY OWL: Relative longer tail, rounder head, different call, has "eyes" on back of neck. I have seen this bird before.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

Spent 3 days in March 84 with David Palmer of CSU who is studying Boreals. I helped him record data. Heard numerous birds on Friday, Mar 9, and observed bird on Sat. Mar. 10th. Cameron Pass area.

This report was written from notes made during after observation; from memory FROM A TAPE Recording made that nite. (subsequently transfered to Notebook)

NAME (print): JOHN J. RAWINSKI

Mailing address: 39 Country Club Drive Monte Vista, COLO. 81144

Signature: John J. Rawinski

Return to:

Hugh E. Kingery  
869 Milwaukee Street  
Denver, Colorado 80206



## Boreal Owl Documentations (Addendum)

In addition to the 2 excellent observations of this species, I spent considerable other nites up between Spring Creek Pass to Slumgullion Pass documenting areas where I heard birds calling. The following dates and information is presented below: Because it is 78-80 miles away from my house, I bias myself toward starry/moonlit calm nites.

3/1/84: CLEAR, CALM, STARRY — 28°F

One, possibly 2 birds heard - Desperado Curve area.

3/24/84: OVERCAST, CALM, 30°F

Desperado Curve area: Bird sang at 5:37 and 6:15. This is response to tape. Call was an extended, desperate sounding too too too. At dusk observed "the owl" fly overhead as I approached call area.

2 other birds were heard that nite in entirely different areas.

3/28/84: Wendy Brown - Wildlife Biologist who works with Whooping cranes, here in the valley, accompanied me that nite. <sup>Two</sup> ~~Three~~ distinctly different birds were heard.

4/3/84: Jack Sherry - USFS Hydrologic Technician accompanied. 25°F; calm; moon 1/4. Three different birds heard.

4/11/84: Windy nite - No birds

4/17/84: w/ Jack Sherry - 3 positive different birds, possible 4th bird (faintly heard)

5/7/84: 1 Bird only heard. for a long time. Couldnt photograph

5/13/84: w/ Janet Schreur - 1 subdued call.



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Date (s): 4/7/84 Time Bird Seen: 7:20 pm to 7:30 pmLocality: SPRING CREEK PASS  
LAKE CITY, HINSDALE, COLORADO  
Nearest town, county and state:Optical equipment: 310 USED BINOCULARS, I USED CAMERA w/ 200 mm LENSIf photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: SEE PHOTO - CANON 35mm w/  
200 mm LENS + FLASH.Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: UNKNOWN Plumage: ADULTLight conditions: NIGHT TIME (FLASHLITE)Distance from bird, and how measured: 15 feet from me; 20 feet from Sid.

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

Bird flew into lower branches of (*P. engelmannii*), carrying a small vole... he had responded to a subdued playing of boreal owl take. He perched, stared at us, and intermittently fed on his vole, in branches about 12 feet off of ground. Sid squeaked, and bird's response was good, looked at us.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

(*Picea engelmannii*) grove among (*Festuca thurberi*) parks. Tree height average OF ABOUT 60-70 feet. Elevation  $\approx$  10,300'; WEST ASPECT.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

DR. SIDNEY GAUTHREAUX - ORNITHOLOGY PROFESSOR - CLEMSON UNIVERSITYSTEVE WAGNER - GRADUATE STUDENT, CLEMSON UNIVERSITY.



Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field.

See photograph: Sid, Steve, and I all had excellent looks at the bird's face. Bird's back was to me. I could see brownish back, short tail, and when bird would look at me I could see dark border of facial disc; spots on blackish forehead... yellow eyes, and as I was telling Steve, to note the light colored bill. I was near the end of a roll of film, and bird would always look back to his vantage point as I snapped shutter.

Size was about 9-10 inches from beak to tail... head squarish. Excuse the photo... we saw bird much better, but one must realize the logistical problems of moving around on snowshoes and trying to flash photograph this highly sought after, ~~elusive~~ elusive owl.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

The call is its typical 12-15 hollow too too too too... crescendoing and decrescendoing... these were sung in a series for 30 seconds. ~~first~~ we heard it sing after I played tape. After walking to clump of Engelmann spruce where bird called from, we saw the owl.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

SAW WHET OWL: LACKS ~~FAVORABLE~~ DARK BLACK BORDER OF FACIAL DISC, HAS DARK BILL, CALL IS DIFFERENT... HAVE MANY TIMES PHOTOGRAPHED (A. acidicus). I have sent CFO copies of SAW whet photo.

Northern pygmy: Usually has longer tail; has different call, rounder head. I have seen 2 pygmy owls previously, and they are unmistakable. esp. black "eyes" on back of neck.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

Spent 3 days in March 1984 with David Palmer of CSU. Helped him record data. Heard numerous birds on Friday, March 9; and observed BOREAL OWL on Saturday, March 10th. CAMERON PASS AREA. SIMILAR SPECIES: SAW WHET- HAVE PHOTOGRAPHED + CALLED MANY; PYGMY OWL - LACKS <sup>DARK</sup> FACIAL DISC. - HAVE SEEN 2 PYGMIES.

This report was written from notes made during after observation; from memory FROM NOTES AND TAPE RECORDING made that nite.

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## Spring Creek Pass Boreal Owl

On April 7th, 1984, myself, Sid Gauthreaux, and Steve Wagner drove to Spring Creek Pass to tape for boreal owls. The following excerpts are from a recording I made immediately after observing one boreal <sup>with them.</sup> at Spring Creek Pass. We used snowshoes and cross country skis to get into the area.

Below is transcribed from my tape.

GR : " We arrived at site at approximately quarter till six, Sid, Steve and myself put on our snowshoes and skis and entered the Desperado Curve\* area, played tape and searched trees with no results. Finally Sid picked out a response ... Sid describe it : "

Sid : Response occurred almost a minute after you ~~start~~ stopped playing tape, and lasted for 30 seconds and was the typical too too too ...

GR : We converged on the group of trees we thought it to be in, when I heard <sup>distinctly</sup> 1 series of its call... we converged on a small group (<1.0 ac) of Engelmann spruce, 60-70' tall, um ... a very dense little clump, scattered among open parks..... and after playing tape again.... notably softer, I heard a flicker of branches <sup>right</sup> behind ~~me~~ my head, and saw the bird fly to one of the taller spruce... it was perched evidently, in about a 30 foot <sup>dense</sup> E. spruce... and later after <sup>on examination of that small</sup> looking at this tree, found pretty good whitewash on a number of lower branches and this may be an important roosting area for it. So I flagged that tree. Sid positioned himself and finally got his light on the bird. Sid, tell me what you saw... describe the bird...



John OK... we watched the bird for about 10 minutes...  
15 minutes..

Sid Oh yeah ... I think about 10 minutes

John .... also, possibly another bird was heard  
as we were on our way out. We are back  
at the truck at 7:52 pm. ... and we are  
gonna go to Danny Carl and try some of  
the traditional hotspots.

1/ Clarification: The flicker of branches right behind me  
was that of a 30' tree. The bird was probably  
in this tree as I played subdued tape. Bird  
flew from this 30' tree, to the larger 60-70' tree  
about 15 feet away. I later found owl pellet in 30' tree!

\* Desperado Curve: corned name. This owl was  
nick named "Desperado" due to his <sup>occasional</sup> distressed  
sounding call, compared to other boreal owl calls.