

Species: Boreal Owl
(Vernacular name)Agolius funereus
(Scientific name)

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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): 1 Oct 1985 Time Bird Seen: 10:15 pm to 11:00 pm.Locality: County line (Delta / Mesa) on Hwy 65 over Grand Mesa
Cedaredge, Delta County, Colo.
Nearest town, county and state:Optical equipment: Nikon 9x30 binoculars + flashlightIf photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: Not doneNumber of birds seen: 2 at a time Sex: — Plumage: Adult
→ 3 or 4 present.Light conditions: dark; still; ~2 days past full moon — very bright & clear.Distance from bird, and how measured: Observed with binocs. from ~25-50 feet; estimated.

Describe the bird's overall behavior: Three birds (a 4th had a slightly higher alarm call — may have been a Saw-whet Owl) responded to playing of Boreal Owl primary song ("snipe-like") per "Fall Survey Technique" — David Palmer. They gave alarm call repeatedly finally flew to tree, perching on bare branches just above me. Somewhat tame, in plain view; inquisitive — peering at me. Flew from branch-to-branch, tree-to-tree. Flight direct but somewhat moth-like or light, fluttering near my head on occasion. Frequently noisy with wings flapping against dead branches upon alighting.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Fairly open, flat area with primarily spruce & fir. Large trees scattered around meadows and open shrubbier areas.

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

None

include size, overall shape, plumage and color. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field. Overall a small, "earless" owl. About 10" long and short-tailed. Eyes with yellow iris & black pupil. Bill pale-colored, nearly yellow. Above row-umber or drab with large white spots on wing coverts, otherwise fairly unspotted above. Undersides white with long grayish-brown streaks down chest & breast; undertail coverts white. Facial disc white and large. Bordered above by wide black lines which then ran down diagonally through eye. Forehead above facial disc brown with ~~to~~ white spots. From back, bird was fairly even drab gray-brown with some paler patches, esp. on hind neck, but not black "eye-spots" on hind-neck & not much spotting on back.



Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.: Responded to tape of primary song with vigorous delivery of alarm ("skien") call. This call was sometimes single notes given occasionally. at other times it gave a long series of these notes lasting half a minute or longer, with individ. calls 2-4 sec. apart.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

- N. Saw-Whet = More rufous tones (this bird was gray-brown). Has dark (not light) bill. Facial disc not so white or well-demarcated. Lacks black "eye-brows" & black line down inner borders of eyes. Has streaked, not spotted, forehead.
- N. Pygmy Owl = Smaller, lacks black border to facial disk; has long tail; has eye-spots on hind-neck.
- Flammulated Owl = has dark eyes.
- Burrowing Owl = long-legged, spotted in front; wrong habitat.
- W. Screech Owl = Lacks white facial disc; is speckled, not streaked down front. Probably would have made out the "saw" sound.
- Prior experience with this and similar species: None with Boreal Owl or N. Saw-Whet. I've seen N. Pygmy Owl twice; Flammulated Owl 3 times; Burrowing & Screech Owls many times.

This report was written from notes made during X after observation; from memory .

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