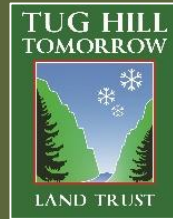


Winter Wildlife Series: All About Owls

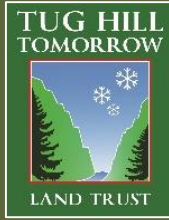


Linda Gibbs
Community Programs Director
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust



Irene Mazzocchi
Retired Region 6 NYSDEC
Wildlife Biologist





Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

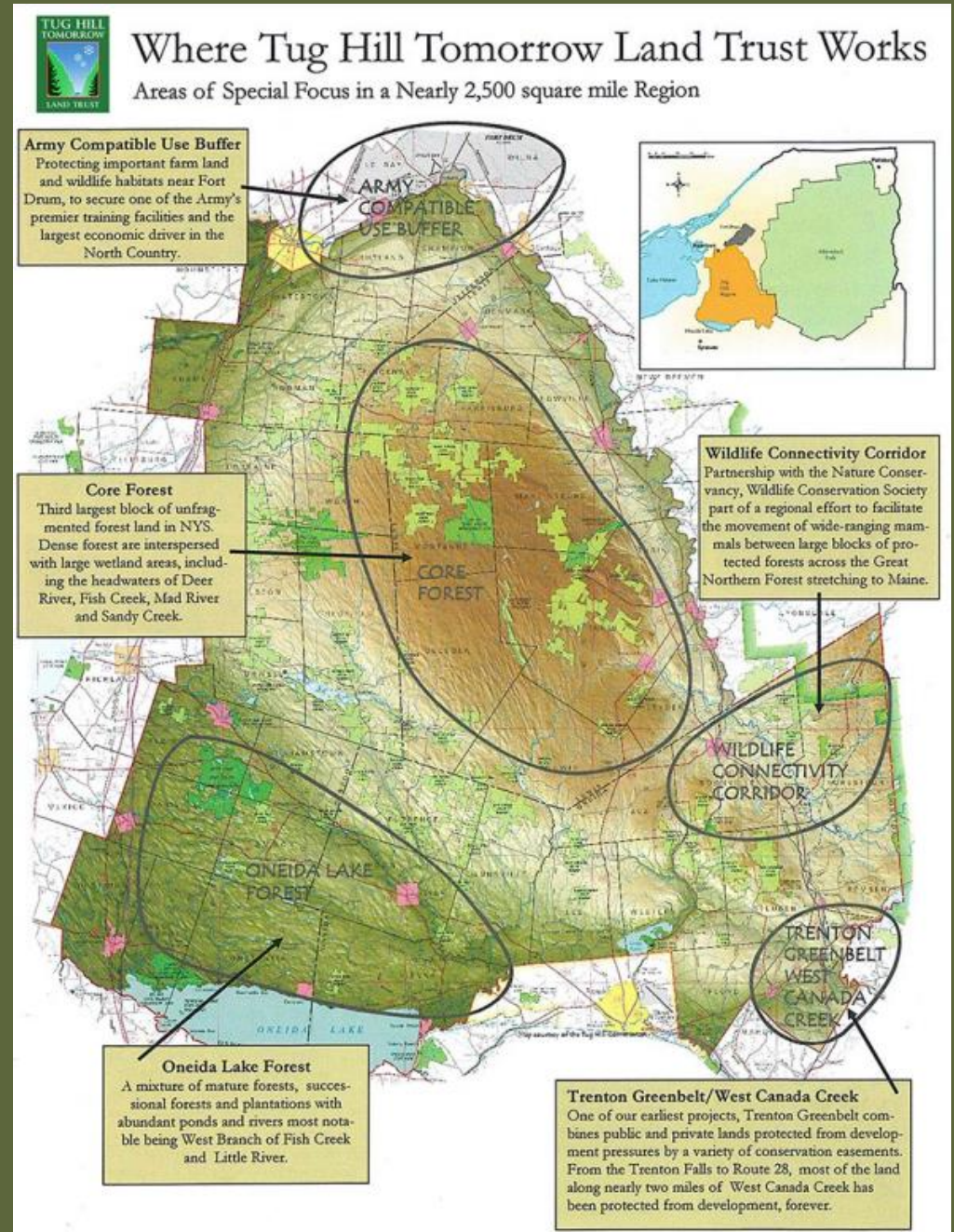
- Regional, private nonprofit organization formed by local landowners in 1991
- Protect the wildlands, working forests and farms of the Tug Hill region and surrounding areas
- Promote appreciation of the region's natural and cultural heritage, for present and future generations.



Meredith Leonard

Diverse Habitat Areas

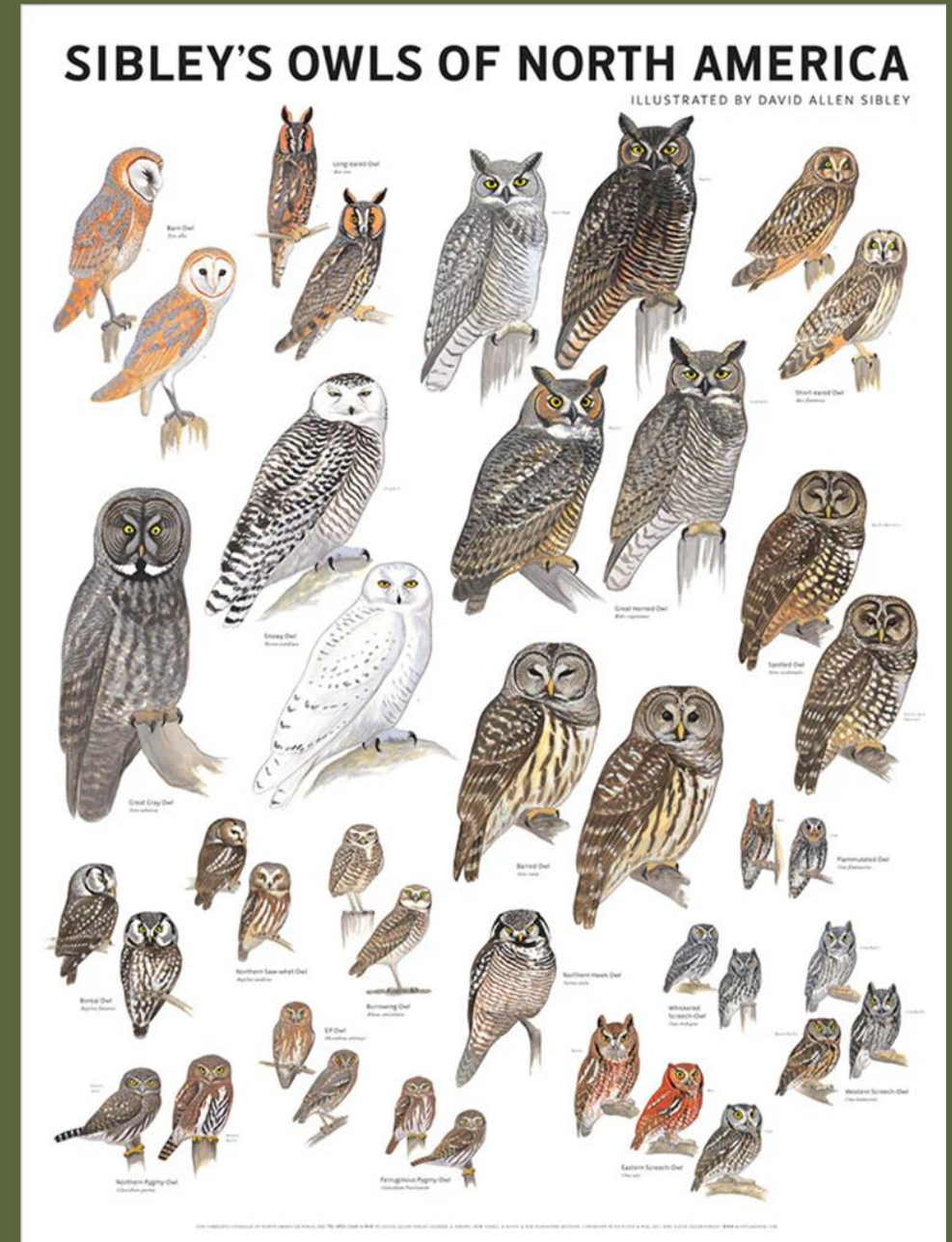
- Forests
- Wetlands
- Young Forests/Shrubby Fields
- Grasslands
- River Corridors
- Farmland
- Developed Cities, Towns, Villages



All About Owls!

- Bird of Prey
- Nocturnal (mostly)
- Large, round head with a flat facial disk
- Forward facing eyes (binocular vision)
- Downward facing beak
- Silent hunters!

FUN FACT #1



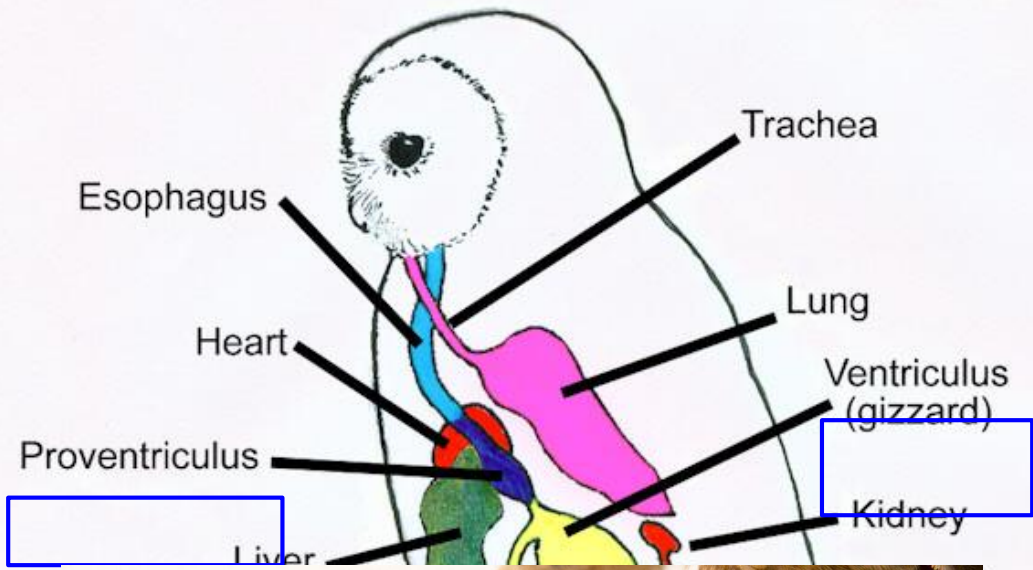
There are 9 Owl Species that can be found in New York State. Some are rarer than others.



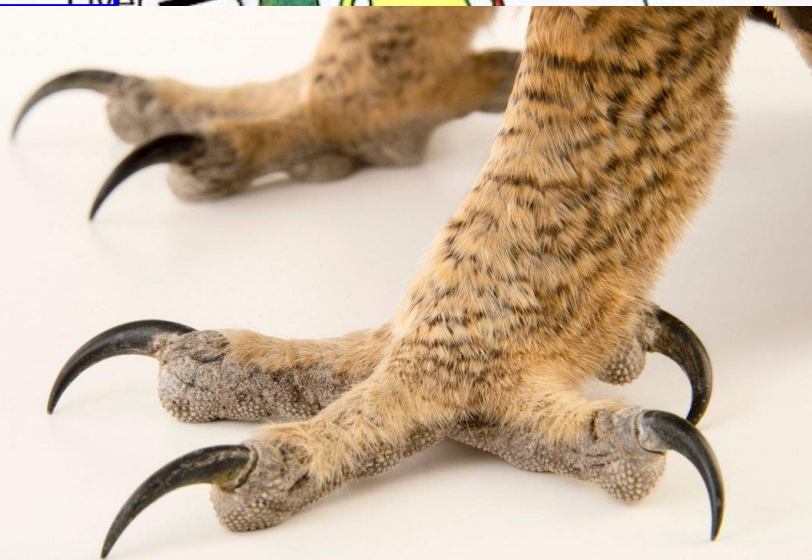
Most common in New York

- Northern Saw-whet
- Barred
- Eastern Screech
- Great Horned

FUN FACT #2



FUN FACT #3



Intestine

a



Andy Droniuk 2014

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL

Aegolius Acadicus



Kenny Miller/Macaulay Library

- Smallest owl in NY at 7-8 inches
- One of the most common owls in forests across North America
- Nocturnal and seldom seen
- Roosts in dense conifers during the day
- Favors deer mice as prey

FUN FACT #4



Northern Saw-whet Owls are
Cavity Nesters

FUN FACT #5





University of Maryland Extension



Wild Birds Unlimited of GPW

EASTERN SCREECH OWL

Megascops asio

- Size of a Robin, 6-9 inches long
- Can be red or gray in color
- Found wherever trees are
- Nests in tree cavities and nest boxes, but builds no nest
- Supreme camouflage
- Eats a variety of songbirds, insects, frogs, fish, tadpoles and bats



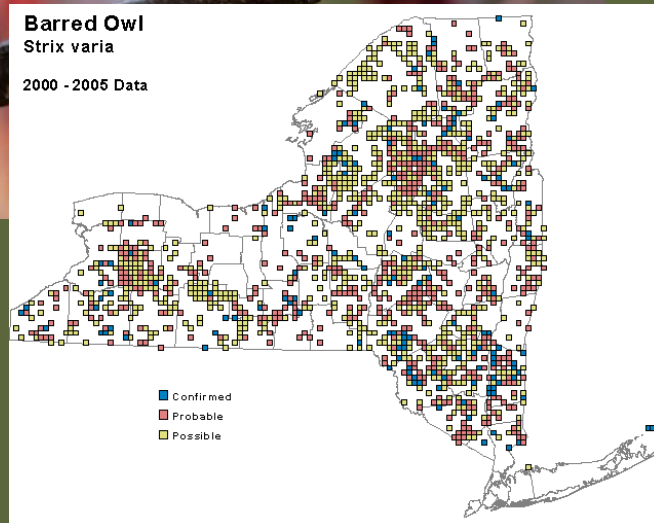
Screech owls nest in tree cavities and nest boxes, but build no nests themselves.



FUN FACT #6



Blair Dudek/Macaulay Library



BARRED OWL

Strix varia

- 16-19 inches long
- Bar-like breast and belly stripes
- **Dark eyes, yellow beak**
- **No ear tufts**
- Favors mixed & mature forests near water
- Eats squirrels, chipmunks, mice, voles, rabbits, smaller birds, frogs, salamanders and snakes



Barred owls are cavity nesters.
They prefer to raise their young
in deep holes of large trees.

Most often heard owl in northeast
woodlands:

*“Who cooks for you? Who cooks for
you all?”*



FUN FACT #7

GREAT HORNED OWL

Bubo virginianus

- Largest forest owl at 18 -24 inches long
- Mixed mature forests near water
- **Yellow eyes, dark beak**
- **Long ear-like feather tufts**
- Can kill prey up to the size of a goose, but most often eats mice, frogs, smaller birds
- At home in deserts, wetlands, forests, grasslands, backyards, cities and other semi-open habitat from the Arctic to the tropics





DFW Urban Wildlife

Great Horned Owls nest as early in the year as January. They adopt abandoned hawk, crow and squirrel nests rather than making their own.

FUN FACT #8



LONG-EARED OWL

Asio otus

- Slimmer than Barred and Great Horned owls, 14-16 inches high
- Surprised expression
- Roosts in dense foliage near tree trunk
- Forages over grasslands for small mammals
- Distinctive 'HOOT' call
- Will use other birds' nests



FUN FACT #9

Long-eared Owls use abandoned stick nests from crows, ravens or hawks.

They prefer dense, young conifer trees or thickets near open fields for foraging.

Nests are typically 4-30 ft above the ground.

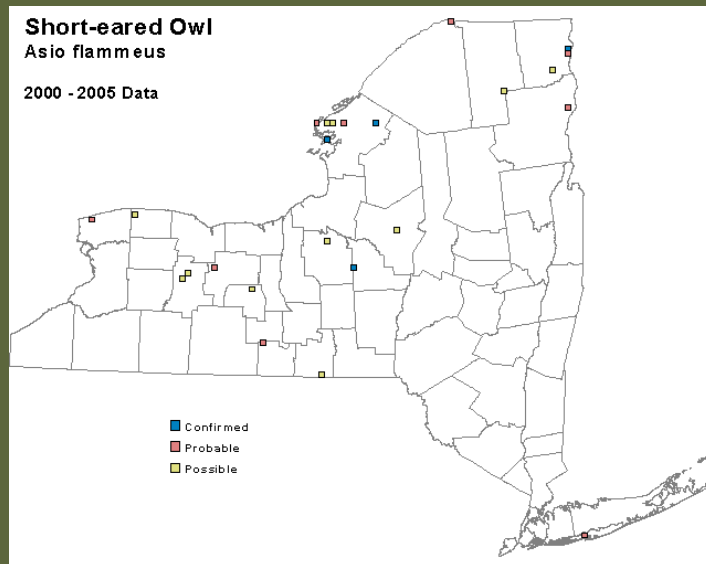
SHORT-EARED OWL

Asio flammeus

Endangered in New York State



- Grassland species, 13-17 long
- Very short ear tufts not always visible
- Perch on fence posts, fly low to the ground
- Flight can be erratic and very fast
- Winter and nest in New York State
- Concern over grassland habitat loss



FUN FACT #10



The Short-eared Owl is one of the few owls that builds its own nest.

The female scrapes out a bowl on the ground, sometimes on top of a previous year's nest.

The bowl is lined with grasses and downy feathers.

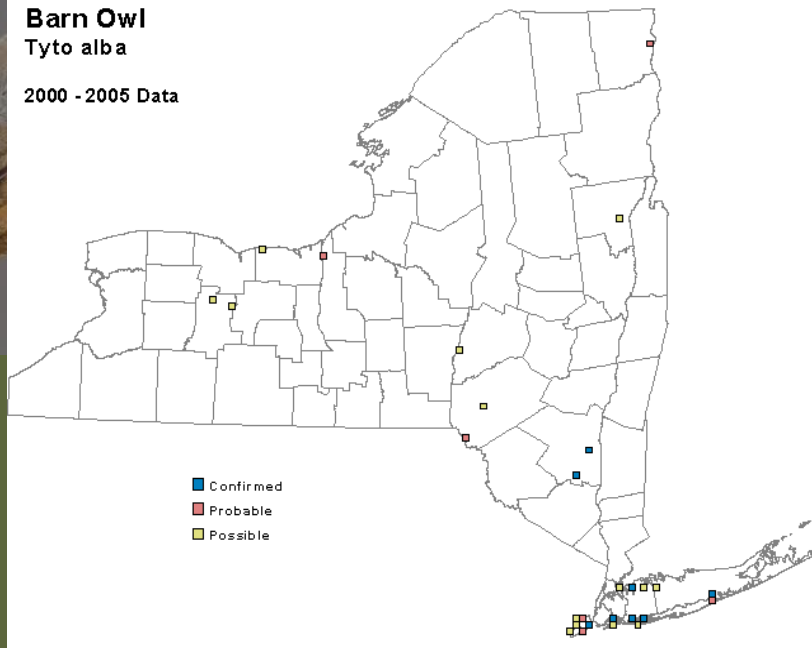
AMERICAN BARN OWL

Tyto furcata

Rare in New York State

- Slimmer, mostly pale, 13-16 inches long
- Roosts in hidden, quiet places during day, especially barns and old buildings
- No hoot – rasps, screeches and hisses
- Sometimes called a ghost owl
- Best at locating prey using sound alone

Barn Owl
Tyto alba
2000 - 2005 Data



FUN FACT #11



American Barn Owls nest many kinds of natural human structures, especially barns.

The female makes a simple nest of her own pellets, shredded with her feet and arranged into a cup.

A Barn Owl family can eat up to 3,000 mice in a season, swallowing them whole!



SNOWY OWL

Bubo scandiacus

- 20-28 inches long
- Largest North American owl **by weight**
- Summers and nests north of the Arctic Circle
- Some winter in wide open fields and shorelines
- Found on ground, may perch on hay bales, utility poles, fence posts
- Look for other agitated birds ‘mobbing’ an owl

FUN FACT #12



Snowy Owls nest right on the tundra, preferring slight, windswept rises blown free of snow.

The female scrapes out a shallow hollow on the bare ground, pressing her body into the depression.

Snowy owls may reuse the same nest site for many years.



Luke Seitz/Macaulay
Library

GREAT GRAY OWL

Strix nebulosi

- RARE visitor to northern NY
- Live in dense, wet evergreen forests of the far north from Ontario, Canada to Alaska
- Gray suit and white bow tie, yellow eyes, 24 – 33 inches long
- Seen during the day
- Hunts in meadows or bogs with evergreen forests nearby
- Hunt dusk, dawn and at night

FUN FACT #13



Great Gray Owls use old nests of hawks, ravens, and sometime squirrels, adding no material.

They may place their eggs in the broken tops of trees, human-made platforms, or in clumps of mistletoe.

What's a group of owls called?

A Parliament!





Project Owlnet
www.projectowl.net

Birding Resources

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
www.allaboutbirds.org

National Audubon Society
www.audubon.org

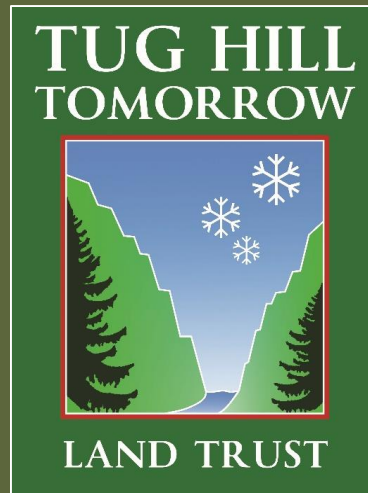
American Bird Conservancy
<https://abcbirds.org>

Thank you! Questions?



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Retired DEC Reg 6 Wildlife
Biologist



Linda Gibbs

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