



Project Report on The Snowy Owl Satellite Telemetry Project

Winter 2011-2012

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The snowy owl season for this year from November 2011 through May 2012 was a great one. We banded a total of 52 snowy owls and recaptured an owl we had banded two years ago. Of the owls banded 42 were captured at Logan Airport, 29 were released at Duxbury Beach and 13 released at Plum Island. In addition to the owls banded at Logan Airport 4 owls were banded at Duxbury Beach and 6 were banded at Plum Island.

All the 53 owls captured were in great condition, good body weight and excellent feather condition. 46 of the owls were hatch year birds (Owls that were born last summer) and 7 were after hatch year birds (owls more than 1 year old). There were five snowy owls found dead this season in Massachusetts, 1 hit by a propeller of a Cape Air plane at Logan, 1 killed by a jet blast at Logan, 1 found dead on Deer Island that died from rodenticide poison, 1 found dead at Plum Island that had a broken wing and 1 found dead at Plum Island that had a pellet stuck in its throat from the teeth on the lower jaw of a rat that had perforated the esophagus and the owl could not regurgitate the pellet and died.



On Sunday March 4th a female snowy owl that was born in the summer of 2011 was captured at Logan Airport and we placed a satellite transmitter with a Teflon harness on the owl then transported it to Plum Island to be released. After arriving at Plum Island we proceeded to the maintenance building to do a short presentation on our snowy owl research project. There were 50+ visitors at the location that learned about snowy owls and watch it get released. Betty Petersen was present representing the Nuttall Ornithological Club that donated the transmitter on this owl. The owl stayed at Plum Island from March 4th through March 10th. On March 11th it started heading south and was back at Logan on March 12 where it stayed until it left the airport on April 12th to begin its journey back to the arctic.



The last 2 owls that were captured at Logan were released at Plum Island on May 11th and May 29th. There were over 700 refuge visitors this winter that got a chance to see the owls and peregrine up close and learned about their natural history before getting to see them fly out onto the refuge.

From communication with researchers on Baffin Island over the years when they have a good lemming year like last summer the owls breed producing lots of young and that is when we see good owl numbers in Massachusetts. If in fact these owls were leaving the

arctic because there was no food in the arctic they would probably never make it here and if they did would not arrive here in good condition.

Over the past 31 years that we have been doing research on snowy owls the best winter to date was the winter of 1986-87 when we banded 43 snowy owls at Logan Airport. This past winter was the second best with 42 banded at Logan.

Thanks to the Nuttall Ornithological Club for supporting this project where we hope to be able to track this owl for 2+ years to follow her movements.

Check out our web site to see updates on this owl at
http://www.massaudubon.org/Birds_and_Birding/snowyowl/index.php



