

Species Sheets: Boreal Owl



photo by Alan Nelson ©

Common name: Boreal Owl
Latin Name: *Aegolius funereus*
Field Marks: Length 10 inches
Wing span 21 inches



Inconspicuous. Similar to smaller Saw-whet, but large facial disk has brown-black borders and bill is yellow. Eyes yellow with white eyebrows. Upperparts buffy-brown with white spots. Creamy white underneath with brown streaks. Feet heavily feathered. Juvenal plumage dark chocolate brown with white eyebrows and mustache for first three months or longer. Females about 43% larger than males.

Habitat:

Northern coniferous and mixed forest across Northern Hemisphere. Spruce and fir with aspen and birch may be favored.

Behavior:

Feeds on small mammals – voles, mice, shrews. Plus small birds and insects. Will hunt from perch to perch zigzagging through forest to grab prey on ground. Nocturnal primarily. Roost next to tree trunk rather than out on limbs, like Saw-whet.

Vocalization:

Male may call “staccato song” of trills that get louder in a series. May repeat for 20 minutes to several hours, even as many as 4000 times.

Nest and eggs:

Pileated Woodpecker nests are favored, also Northern Flicker. 3-6 eggs. Female usually chooses new mate and nest site each year. Man-made nest boxes used by 95% of breeders in parts of Europe.

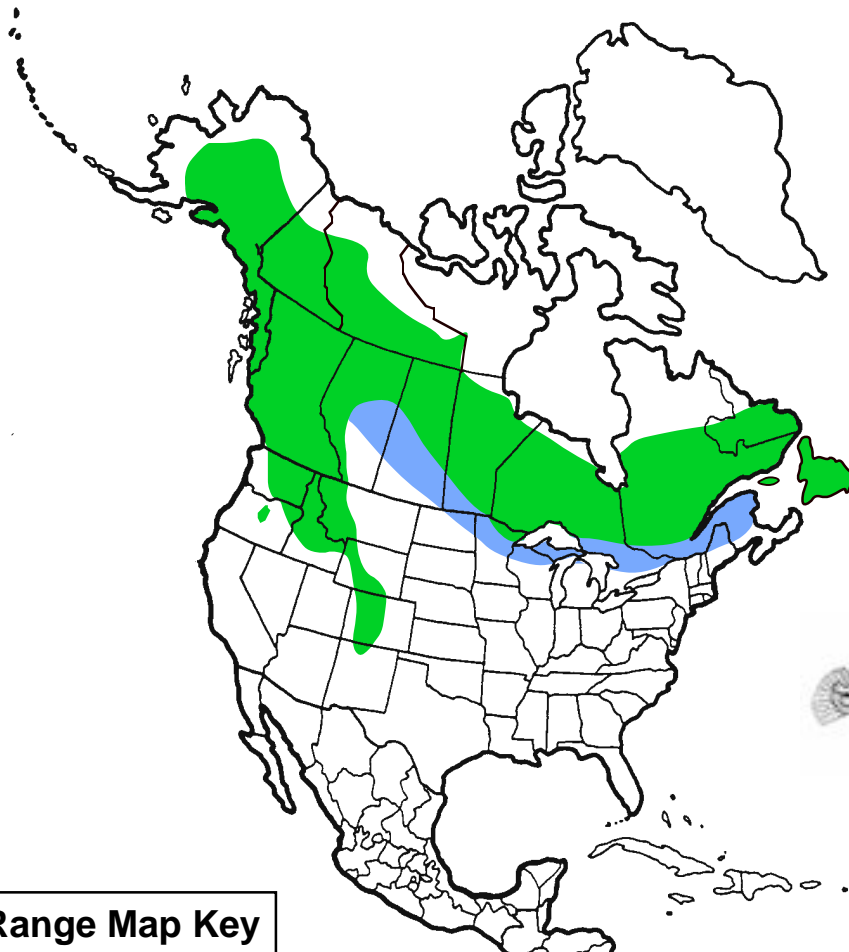
Movement:

Resident, with male on breeding grounds year-round. Young and females may disperse in winter. May migrate when winter food supplies are low.

Interesting Fact:

Boreal Owls have very asymmetric ear openings so that skull appears very different from left side to right. Uses sound to locate prey, taking noisy, moving animals more often than stationary, quiet ones. Captures prey that is active under snow and vegetation. Males may mate with more than one female in a season, so can be “polygynous”.

Range Map: Boreal Owl



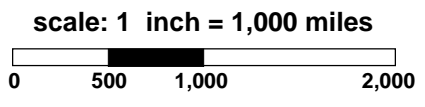
Boreal Owl. Copyright © Alan Nelson



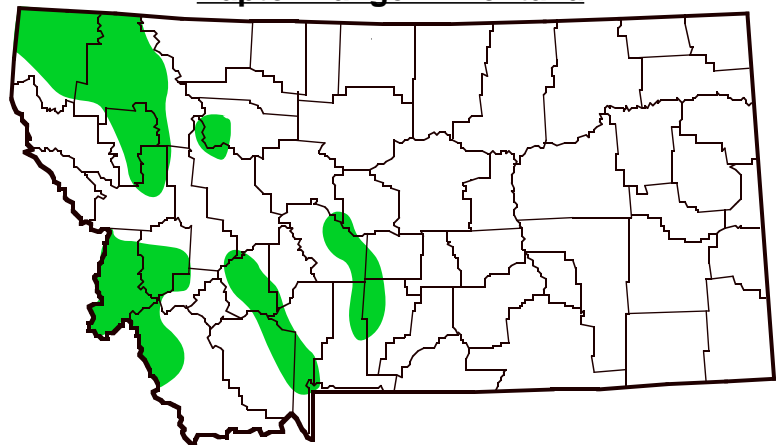
These maps are designed to show the general limits of occurrence. Within those limits, each species will likely be found only in appropriate habitat.

Range Map Key

- Summer
- Year-round
- Winter



Raptor Range in Montana



Montana range maps are based on the Montana Bird Distribution data.