

MONTANA OWL WORKSHOP

APRIL 26 – MAY 1, 2016

LEADERS: DENVER HOLT & MATT LARSON

COMPILED BY: DENVER HOLT

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003
AUSTIN, TX 78746
WWW.VENTBIRD.COM**

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April 26–May 1, 2016
By Denver Holt

Our 2016 Montana Owl Workshop was another fun trip. We saw 5 species of owls, including Great Horned, Northern Pygmy, Northern Saw-whet, Long-eared, and Short-eared. We had terrific encounters as all species were breeding. In addition to seeing the owls and discussing field marks, we delved—in great detail—into evolutionary adaptations in owls and how owls cope within the environments they occur.

On our first morning out, ORI (Owl Research Institute) researchers guided us to two Northern Pygmy-Owl nests. At the first nest we had brief looks at the male, while at the second nest the female peered from her tiny two-inch circular nest cavity entrance. She was very obliging for about 15 minutes and then retired back into the cavity, presumably to incubate eggs or brood chicks.

Later that morning, and after searching about 25 trees with potential nest holes, we were pleased to see a female Northern Saw-whet Owl perched at her nest cavity. We could see much of her body and enjoyed detailed study of her plumage and that gorgeous Saw-whet Owl face. This nest was in an old Pileated Woodpecker nest hole. As with the Pygmy-Owl, once the owls realize there is no threat from the people below, they drop back into the nest cavity to tend to eggs or chicks.

It's not often we see Pygmy and Saw-whet owls at nests on the same day. It was the only time we saw these species on the trip. At our high elevation nest box study, our only roadside Boreal Owl nest failed before our group could see it. Reasons for the failure were unknown.

Great Horned Owls were relatively abundant. We observed them along roadsides and in farm yards, and located several nests with chicks. We had many outstanding looks at this species, and it sometimes became a workshop competition as to how many we could find in one day.

Short-eared Owls were observed conducting a variety of behaviors, ranging from hunting low over grasslands to engaging in territorial skirmishes with neighboring Short-eared Owls. We also had some great looks at aerial courtship displays, also known as ski-dancing. Many of the Short-eared Owls were very obliging as they sat on fence posts and afforded us wonderful looks with the spotting scopes.

Our group was also able to witness ORI researchers capture and band Long-eared Owls. Additionally, we had fine looks at a Long-eared Owl female on a nest, and were able to observe researchers band and take measurement data on the male. This study is one of the longest and most detailed of this species in the world—30 years and counting.

Except for Short-eared Owls, overall owl numbers were down in 2016. It's always difficult finding owls; however, our group was resilient, worked hard, and eventually had very satisfying looks at several species. Unfortunately, we missed Barn Owl, Great Gray Owl, and Boreal Owl, but look forward to next year.

VENT: Montana Owl Workshop Field Checklist

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|----|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | COMMON NAME | SCIENTIFIC NAME | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Waterfowl | Anatidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Canada Goose | <i>Branta canadensis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Gadwall | <i>Anas strepera</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | American Wigeon | <i>Anas americana</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Green-winged Teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Northern Shoveler | <i>Anas clypeata</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Canvasback | <i>Aythya valisineria</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Redhead | <i>Aythya americana</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Ring-necked Duck | <i>Aythya collaris</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Lesser Scaup | <i>Aythya affinis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | Harlequin | <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | Bufflehead | <i>Bucephala albeola</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Common Goldeneye | <i>Bucephala clangula</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | Barrow's Goldeneye | <i>Bucephala islandica</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | Hooded Merganser | <i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Common Merganser | <i>Mergus merganser</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Ruddy Duck | <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | Cinnamon Teal | <i>Anas cyanoptera</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | Trumpeter Swam | <i>Cygnus buccinator</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | Pheasants, Grouse and Allies | Phasianidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | Gray Partridge (I) | <i>Perdix perdix</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | Ring-necked Pheasant (I) | <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25 | Ruffed Grouse | <i>Bonasa umbellus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 26 | Loons | Gaviidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | Common Loon | <i>Gavia immer</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 28 | Grebes | Podicipedidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | Horned Grebe | <i>Podiceps auritus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 30 | Red-necked Grebe | <i>Podiceps grisegena</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 31 | Cormorants | Phalacrocoracidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 32 | Double-crested Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 33 | Pelicans | Pelecanidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 34 | American White Pelican | <i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 35 | Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns | Ardeidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 36 | Great Blue Heron | <i>Ardea herodias</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 37 | New World Vultures | Cathartidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 38 | Turkey Vulture | <i>Cathartes aura</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 39 | Osprey | Pandionidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 40 | Osprey | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 41 | Hawks, Eagles and Kites | Accipitridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 42 | Bald Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 43 | Northern Harrier | <i>Circus cyaneus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 44 | Sharp-shinned Hawk | <i>Accipiter striatus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 45 | Cooper's Hawk | <i>Accipiter cooperii</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 46 | Northern Goshawk | <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 47 | Red-tailed Hawk | <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 48 | Golden Eagle | <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 49 | Rails, Gallinules and Coots | Rallidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 50 | American Coot | <i>Fulica americana</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 51 | Cranes | Gruidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| 1 | COMMON NAME | SCIENTIFIC NAME | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 52 | Sandhill Crane | <i>Grus canadensis</i> | H | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 53 | Stilts and Avocets | Recurvirostridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 54 | Black-necked Stilt | <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 55 | American Avocet | <i>Recurvirostra americana</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 56 | Plovers and Lapwings | Charadriidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 57 | Killdeer | <i>Charadrius vociferus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 58 | Sandpipers and Allies | Scolopacidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 59 | Spotted Sandpiper | <i>Actitis macularius</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 60 | Long-billed Curlew | <i>Numenius americanus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 61 | Wilson's Snipe | <i>Gallinago delicata</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 62 | Solitary Sandpiper | <i>Tringa solitaria</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 63 | Semi-palmated Sandpiper | <i>Caladris pusilla</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 64 | Least Sandpiper | <i>Caladris minutilla</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 65 | Gulls, Terns and Skimmers | Laridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 66 | Ring-billed Gull | <i>Larus delawarensis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 67 | California Gull | <i>Larus californicus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 68 | Pigeons and Doves | Columbidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 69 | Rock Pigeon (I) | <i>Columba livia</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 70 | Eurasian Collared-Dove (I) | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 71 | Mourning Dove | <i>Zenaida macroura</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 72 | Owls | Strigidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 73 | Western Screech-Owl | <i>Megascops kennicottii</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 74 | Great Horned Owl | <i>Bubo virginianus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 75 | Northern Pygmy-Owl | <i>Glaucidium gnoma</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 76 | Long-eared Owl | <i>Asio otus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 77 | Short-eared Owl | <i>Asio flammeus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 78 | Boreal Owl | <i>Aegolius funereus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 79 | Northern Saw-whet Owl | <i>Aegolius acadicus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 80 | Swifts | Apodidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 81 | White-throated Swift | <i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 82 | Woodpeckers | Picidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 83 | Red-naped Sapsucker | <i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 84 | Williamson's Sapsucker | <i>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 85 | Downy Woodpecker | <i>Picoides pubescens</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 86 | Northern Flicker | <i>Colaptes auratus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 87 | Pileated Woodpecker | <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 88 | Falcons and Caracaras | Falconidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 89 | American Kestrel | <i>Falco sparverius</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 90 | Crows, Jays and Magpies | Corvidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 91 | Gray Jay | <i>Perisoreus canadensis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 92 | Black-billed Magpie | <i>Pica hudsonia</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 93 | American Crow | <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 94 | Common Raven | <i>Corvus corax</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 95 | Swallows | Hirundinidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 96 | Tree Swallow | <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 97 | Violet-green Swallow | <i>Tachycineta thalassina</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 98 | Northern Rough-winged Swallow | <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 99 | Chickadees and Tits | Paridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | Black-capped Chickadee | <i>Poecile atricapillus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 101 | Mountain Chickadee | <i>Poecile gambeli</i> | H | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| 102 | Nuthatches | Sittidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 103 | Red-breasted Nuthatch | <i>Sitta canadensis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 104 | White-breasted Nuthatch | <i>Sitta carolinensis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 105 | Kinglets | Regulidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 106 | Golden-crowned Kinglet | <i>Regulus satrapa</i> | H | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 107 | Ruby-crowned Kinglet | <i>Regulus calendula</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 108 | Thrushes and Allies | Turdidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 109 | Mountain Bluebird | <i>Sialia currucoides</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 110 | American Robin | <i>Turdus migratorius</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 111 | Starlings | Sturnidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 112 | European Starling (I) | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 113 | Waxwings | Bombycillidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 114 | Cedar Waxwing | <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 115 | New World Warblers | Parulidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 116 | Orange-crowned Warbler | <i>Oreothlypis celata</i> | H | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 117 | Yellow-rumped Warbler | <i>Setophaga coronata</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 118 | Buntings, Sparrows and Allies | Emberizidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 119 | Song Sparrow | <i>Melospiza melodia</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 120 | Dark-eyed Junco | <i>Junco hyemalis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 121 | Troupials and Allies | Icteridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 122 | Red-winged Blackbird | <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 123 | Western Meadowlark | <i>Sturnella neglecta</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 124 | Yellow-headed Blackbird | <i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 125 | Brewer's Blackbird | <i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 126 | Brown-headed Cowbird | <i>Molothrus ater</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 127 | Siskins, Crossbills and Allies | Fringillidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 128 | House Finch | <i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 129 | Pine Siskin | <i>Spinus pinus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 130 | American Goldfinch | <i>Spinus tristis</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 131 | Old World Sparrows | Passeridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 132 | House Sparrow (I) | <i>Passer domesticus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 143 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 144 | MAMMALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 145 | Squirrels, Prairie Dogs & Marmot | Sciuridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 146 | Red Squirrel | <i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 147 | Yellow-pine Chipmunk | <i>Tamias amoenus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 148 | Columbian Ground-Squirrel | <i>Spermophilus columbianus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 149 | Yellow-bellied Marmot | <i>Marmota flaviventris</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 150 | Northern Flying Squirrel | <i>Glaucomys sabrinus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 151 | Rats & Mice | Muridae | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| 152 | Common Muskrat | <i>Ondatra zibethicus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 153 | Bears | Ursidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 154 | American Black Bear | <i>Ursus americanus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 155 | Deer | Cervidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 156 | White-tailed Deer | <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 157 | Bison, Sheep & Goats | Bovidae | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 158 | American Bison | <i>Bison bison</i> | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 159 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |