

Of special local interest, Michael Root reported on the status and breeding ecology of uncommon raptors in northwestern Connecticut. In the second year of his study with Peter DeSimone, 20 Gosawks, 7 Red-shouldered Hawks, 7 Barred and 3 Great Horned Owl nests were found within a 15 mile radius of Sharon, Connecticut. The investigators are monitoring as many nests as possible, gathering data on nesting habits, territory size and utilization, food habits, and the interrelationship of these species within their nesting territories.

NOTES ON GREAT GRAY OWLS

by Tad Lawrence, Cambridge

A recent study in northeastern Finland, by P. Erkki and K. Loisa, focussed on nesting Great Gray Owls (Strix nebulosa) in spruce dominated mixed forests with clear areas of bog. It appears that these birds prefer this habitat, for all but one of the seven nests observed had been constructed by other species and were used without alteration by the owls.

Only the female incubated the eggs and cared for the young. The smaller male did the vast majority of hunting, primarily during the "darker half of the day," until the young could be safely left unattended. The female was provided with at least four voles (Microtus) daily. After the young hatched, as many as 14 were brought to the nest, comprising 88 per cent of the total prey. In light of the recent irruption of Great Gray Owl, this prey species is of special interest, for Microtus is widespread throughout the northeastern United States.

The authors note that the striking sexual dimorphism of these owls seems to be adaptive. The female's larger size is needed for thermal regulation during incubation; the male's smaller size aids agility in hunting. (This trait is common among raptors.)

I am unaware of anyone reporting size differences among birds seen during last winter's irruption. I would appreciate information from anyone who saw several birds, particularly on the same date. Write to the author at 17 Willard Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

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