

GRANDPA SAGE THE SNOWY OWL

Do you feel royal today?



Photo: Audubon.org - Glenn Berbery

I feel that I am related to royalty! **Grandpa Sage** is a very regal looking bird. He is as white as fresh snow and his eyes are piercing yellow. This is much different than when he was born with dark brown during his youth - much like the females year around.



The feathers on **Grandpa** are incredibly adapted for life in extremely cold temperatures and silent flight. His thick feathers provide insulation from Arctic cold, which makes Snowy Owls North America's heaviest owl, typically weighing about 4 pounds. In my opinion, he is king of the arctic birds.

Grandpa and his friends feed and nest in the Arctic tundra of the northernmost stretches of Alaska, Canada, and Eurasia. It is here where they can blend in with the snowy surroundings and hunt for lemmings on silent wings; thereby, catching the lemmings off guard. The quietness of their flight is owed to their feather structure.

Snowy owls winter south through Canada and northern Eurasia, with **irruptions** occurring further south in some years. Snowy owls are attracted to open areas like coastal dunes and prairies that appear somewhat similar to tundra.

Cool Fact: In many African countries, the owl is associated with sorcery and magic. Does this remind you of Harry Potter?

Bird irruptions: Movement of birds outside of their normal range due to fluctuations in their food supply. These fluctuations may be the result of too little food, which forces the birds to seek food outside of their range. Too much food results in a high nesting success and many young birds that need to spread out to find food.

