

FIELD NOTES

Saw-whet Owls in Atlantic Beach: The Saw-whet Owl invasion during the fall of 1965 was well documented by the large numbers netted at coastal banding stations. My experience with this tiny predator may be of interest. Banding was done in the garden half of our 85' x 120' plot in densely residential Atlantic Beach, just outside the New York City limits. The barrier beach here is about 600 yards wide, separated from Long Island proper by about 400 yards of water. The garden is dominated by three Norway Maples and bordered by ornamental evergreens and shrubs, creating an open park-like area which the Saw-whets evidently found to their liking. One hundred eight-five feet of Japanese mist nets of the type designed for taking warblers (1¼") were operated day and night from mid-August on. The nets were checked regularly after dark until our retirement which, on flight nights, was often well past midnight.

Thirty-one Saw-whet Owls were banded here between September 30 and November 30. Thirty of these were mist-netted; one entered a wire trap baited with dripping water shortly after nightfall. At no time was an owl seen roosting in the garden during the day and only one other was seen at night besides those netted. An attempt to hand catch that individual failed. The time of discovery in the nets and the date of banding were as follows:

1. 9/30	6:30 AM	12. 10/24	10:30 PM	22. 11/4	11:15 PM
2. 10/6	6:30 AM	13. 10/25	5:30 AM	23. "	11:30 PM
3. 10/11	9:30 PM	14. 10/28	7:00 AM	24. 11/6	6:15 AM
4. 10/17	6:00 AM	15. 10/29	8:30 PM	25. 11/7	6:00 AM
5. "	"	16. "	"	26. 11/10	6:30 AM
6. "	"	17. "	9:30 PM	27. "	"
7. "	"	18. "	11:15 PM	28. "	"
8. "	"	19. 10/30	6:00 AM	29. "	6:00 PM
9. "	9:30 PM	20. 11/4	9:45 PM	30. 11/25	7:00 AM
10. 10/24	8:30 PM	21. "	"	31. 11/30	10:15 PM
11. "	9:30 PM				

Multiple owl nights were associated with north or northwesterly winds with one exception. On that occasion a cold front had passed thru the previous night. The owls, appearing at all hours of the night, were apparently hunting actively in the garden since all but a few were caught in the lower shelves of the nets. Nor were they the only owls present, for on December 1 a Long-eared Owl was seen perched on the bird bath from where it was flushed toward the net. The fine netting stopped it long enough to permit its capture.

Some measure of the magnitude of the Saw-whet Owl flight can be gleaned from the above statistics, for if that many owls could be caught in one garden, however strategically located, how many were actually passing thru Atlantic Beach, Long Island and New York State this fall?

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