

Boreal Owl

(*Aegolius funereus*)

FIELD MARKS: Round-headed, although head appears rectangular. Eyes yellow, bill yellow/white. Facial disk white, surrounded by distinct black trim. Forehead spotted. Ventrally, white with brown vertical streaks along chest, sides, and flanks. Dorsally, brown with large conspicuous white spots. Juveniles have a dark brown/black facial disk, white forehead, and are light chocolate brown throughout the upper chest, grading into light brown on the belly. By early winter, juveniles resemble adults in plumage. **SIZE:** nine to 11 inches. **WEIGHT:** four to six ounces. **SIMILAR SPECIES:** Saw-whet owl is smaller, bill is black, has reddish/brown on the facial disk, and ventral streaking.

HABITAT: High elevation spruce/fir forest, with lodgepole pine sometimes present. **VOICE:** "To, to, to, to..." given rapidly and varying in number. Voice is similar to common snipe. **NATURAL HISTORY:** Begins nesting in late March or April. Nests in woodpecker holes or possibly natural cavities. Clutch size two to six. Incubation approximately 28 days. Young fledge at approximately 30 days. Resident and migratory, with some elevational migration. **FOOD HABITS:** Predominantly small mammals, with a few birds and insects. **STATUS:** Before 1984, considered a Canadian migrant to Montana. Since then, surveys have found these owls common in forests above 5,000 feet in western Montana. First Montana nest site discovered in 1988. Under consideration for listing as a species of special concern by the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

