

## THE GREAT GRAY OWL.

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The great gray owl, (*Scotiaptex cinerea*) is one of the rarest and most mysterious visitants to this part of Canada. Its movements, its coming and going are as eccentric and unfathomable as those of the snowy owl, pine grosbeak, Bohemian waxwing, and others of our true Canadian birds. At the same time it is one of the birds concerning which the least data and observations are available. Its range extends from Lake Superior to the Yukon and from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific Ocean. Here it does not live in open country, in the "barrens," as does the snowy owl, (*Nyctea nyctea*), but confines its operations to the large, dense forests of the region. From here it does not stray far, rarely passing the southern boundary of the Dominion. Mr. Donald Gunn states that this owl is to be found summer and winter throughout all the country commonly known as the Hudson Bay Territory. Nor is it abundant even there, in its chosen habitat, as Mr. McFarlane, who has been in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company in the Anderson River district since 1859 or '60, states that he obtained but "very few specimens", although he is a very gifted naturalist and keen observer. No wonder then, that records of their nests are also few and far between. I can find two records only, quoted both in Bendire's Life Histories of North American Birds, and Baird, Brewer and Ridgway, North American Birds. One nest was found on a 23rd of May, by Dr. Richardson, "on the top of a lofty balsam poplar, composed of sticks with a lining of feathers. It contained three young birds covered with whitish down." The other was found by McFarlane, "on the 19th of July, 1862, near the Lockhart River, on the route to Fort Good Hope; it was built on a spruce pine tree at a height of about 20 feet and was composed of twigs and mosses, thinly lined with feathers and down. It contained two eggs and two young, both of which had lately died." Their food is, according to Mr. Gunn, rabbits and mice, whereas Mr. Dall found in the stomach of one shot in April 20th, in the Yukon, the remains of thirteen redpolls, (*Acanthis linaria*). Of nine stomachs examined by Prof. K. Fisher, of Washington, one contained a small bird, seven mice and four other mammals.

However, the reason for writing this study was not the giving of these data, but rather to record the exceedingly great disparity between the large size of the bird and the smallness of the