

OWL CALLS

I write with regard to the article by C.S. HOUSTON, C.J. ESCOTT and R.C. GODWIN, *The Great Gray Owls that weren't*. (Blue Jay 40:164-165).

On 11 June 1985 we were canoeing on the Wisconsin River just below the dam at the Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, U.S.A., when we saw one adult and two immature Great Horned Owls on the east bank of the river in Columbia County. This was between 0700 and 0730 h Central time. The owlets were giving single, somewhat shrill, ascending shrieks that reminded us most closely of the food-begging call of the Siberian Crane chick (downy young and juvenile, which we grant is impossible to hear on this continent except at the International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, Wisconsin, where both of us were employed).

The adult flew up the cliffy bank away from us and the two fledglings followed in jerky short hops or flights from branch to branch and tree to tree until the activity subsided and we could see them no more.

Although notable, we did not find the vocalization remarkable. We have not heard it since, as we've had no more encounters with Great Horned owlets. After 1.5 years we've listened to Peterson's *Field guide to the western birds* tape to compare our memories with the Great Gray Owl juvenile food begging call and although we concede to our memory that the Siberian Crane chick call best compares with what we heard, the Great Gray Owl juvenile call on the tape is of a very similar nature.

Scott heard the same vocalization described above from a fledgling Great Horned Owl in September 1983 near Briggsville, Wisconsin (Marquette County). This owl was alternately calling and then flying around to try its wings. It was not a proficient flyer and must have hatched later in the year than normal for this species in our area. — *Scott and Ann Swengel*, 315 4th Avenue, Baraboo, Wisconsin, U.S.A. 53913

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIES

Although Black-billed Magpies are regular and common as far north as Prince Albert National Park, I had not encountered one north of there until 1984 when a pair was observed at Weyakwin Lake, 60 miles south of La Ronge. In 1985 the species was again observed at Weyakwin.

In September 1986 a single magpie was observed at La Ronge, the first I have seen in 15 years of residency here. Two were seen during my Christmas bird count on 26 December. Perhaps this represents a range extension. — *Jim Paul*, Box 205, La Ronge, Saskatchewan. S0J 1L0

EDITOR'S NOTE: There are more northerly records of presumed stragglers such as one at the Lorado refuse dump at Beaverlodge Lake near Lake Athabasca for 3 weeks in November 1957 (Heaslip 1959), one at Stony Rapids on 15 July 1963 by Anweiler (Audubon Field Notes 17:468, 1963 and Nero 1967) and one at Black Lake daily through February 1964 by Mrs. Arnold Morberg (Nero 1967).