



© iistockphoto.com/Klaas Lingbeek-van

### FAST FACTS

**NAME:** Snowy owl

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Bubo (Nyctea) scandiaca*

**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 1.6 to 3 kg

**AVERAGE WINGSPAN:** 1.3 to 1.5 m

**AVERAGE LIFESPAN:** 9.5 years (in the wild)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Unlike many other owls, the snowy owl is not nocturnal. With almost constant daylight during their breeding and nesting periods in the Arctic, many believe the owls have adapted to their environment.

### PHYSIOLOGY

These beautiful birds have white and dark brown feathers covering their bodies that supply them with camouflage in their usually snowy habitat. Males can be pure white, however females always have some brown feathers. Since snowy owls are found in colder climates, they have a thick layer of down underneath their many layers of feathers to keep themselves warm in even the most frigid temperatures.

The snowy owl is well equipped for hunting and can see further distances than humans. Also, their eyes have circles of feathers around them that help reflect sound to their ears. These birds are great judges of distance which helps them to swoop down and catch their prey, such as lemmings and foxes, with their 25 to 35 mm long black claws.

### HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

Snowy owls chose a breeding partner and usually stay with that owl for the rest of their lives. Breeding takes place from about February to March and during courtship, the male snowy owl often kills a prey, usually a lemming, and holds it in his mouth to attract females.

A female can typically lay between three and 11 eggs, called a clutch. These birds are usually shy, but become very protective with their young often shrieking and diving at potential predators.

These owls prefer a snowy habitat where they can disguise their white bodies. They tend to live in tree tops and build their nests in the brush of high areas in the arctic tundra.

### RANGE

Snowy owls can live in the Arctic regions of North America and Eurasia year-round. However, some only stay during breeding and nesting season and then migrate as far as southern states, like Georgia, in the United States. Some snowy owls also cross the Atlantic Ocean migrating between Russia and Canada.