

76. Great Gray Owl F

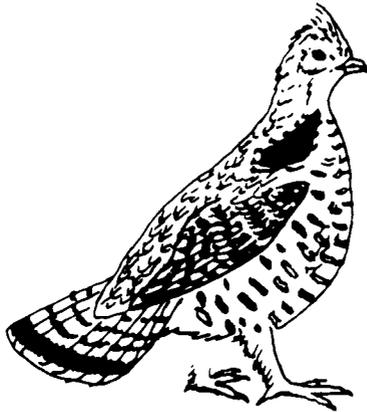
TRAITS: Large gray owl; forward-facing eyes, rounded head, sharp talons and hooked bill.

HABITAT: Boreal forest mosaic; nests in old trees but feeds in open areas including early successional stages, muskegs, and along rivers.

FOODS: Snowshoe hares, voles, squirrels.

EATEN BY: No predators known.

"GEE WHIZ": The great gray owl is the largest owl in Alaska, although the great horned owl and snowy owls are heavier and stronger.



77. Ruffed Grouse F

TRAITS: Chicken-like bird with a ruff of black feathers on the sides of neck; dark band at edge of gray tail.

HABITAT: Hardwood forests, also thickets of willow and alder.

FOODS: Leaves, shoots, seeds, and berries of trees, groundcover and understory plants; chicks eat mainly insects.

EATEN BY: Goshawks, great horned owls, great gray owls, foxes, lynx, humans.

"GEE WHIZ": May help transport seeds of some forest plants.



78. Ptarmigan *

TRAITS: In winter ptarmigan are all white; in summer their plumage is barred, grayish-brown.

HABITAT: Alpine and lowland tundra and forest.

FOODS: Mainly buds and twigs of willow, dwarf birch, and other shrubs, also seeds, berries, and some insects.

EATEN BY: Foxes, weasels, gyrfalcons, golden eagles, humans.

"GEE WHIZ": Ptarmigan have fully feathered feet; these provide insulation and "snowshoes" that allow ptarmigan to walk on the snow surface; ptarmigan often roost in snow banks to keep warm; their dense feathers and down provide excellent insulation against the cold.