

Notes on the type of *Bubo virginianus* *sclariventris*

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In attempting to make order out of the variation he noted among the 50 pale Great Horned Owls *Bubo virginianus* from Ontario in the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), Snyder (1961) divided them into more heavily and less heavily barred groups. Considering the less heavily marked birds to be *subarcticus*, he named the darker birds *B. v. sclariventris*, using a female taken on 26 February 1948 as the holotype. The condition of its gonads was not given. He apparently used only specimens in the ROM, and did not mention the existing types of *subarcticus* and *occidentalis*. The range of *sclariventris* was mapped by Karalus & Eckert (1974), Johnsgard (1988) and McGillivray (1989), and the name was used by James (1991) and Pittaway (1993).

Godfrey (1986) and Browning (1990) were unable to express an opinion on the validity of *sclariventris*, and it has not been included in any taxonomic work to date, including Houston *et al.* (1998) and König *et al.* (1999). Dickerman (1992) studied the series of 60 nesting-season specimens of the subarctic populations in the then National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, and found no distinctive subpopulations, but the Ottawa collection is weak in material from Ontario.

To help evaluate the validity of the name *sclariventris*, James A. Dick and S. Ross James of the ROM selected for me paratype 34,2,2,1 as being most similar to the holotype. I compared it with the types of *subarcticus* and *occidentalis* in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Those two types differ, that of *occidentalis* being more heavily barred. Giving some allowance for possible spoiling of the specimens due to their different ages (1948 vs 1880), the paratype of *sclariventris* was a very close match to the holotype of *occidentalis*. Thus *B. v. sclariventris* Snyder is a junior synonym of *B. v. occidentalis* Stone, earlier considered to be a junior synonym of *B. v. subarcticus* Hoy (Stone 1897, Dickerman 1991).

In the absence of adequate nesting-season material, especially from the northern fringes of the range, *subarcticus* must be used for specimens showing a spectrum of variation in the extent of dark markings, and perhaps in the degree of buffy coloration (Dickerman 1992). If in the future *subarcticus* is subdivided, close attention must be paid to the differences between the types of *subarcticus* and *occidentalis*, both migrants, from Wisconsin and Iowa respectively.

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