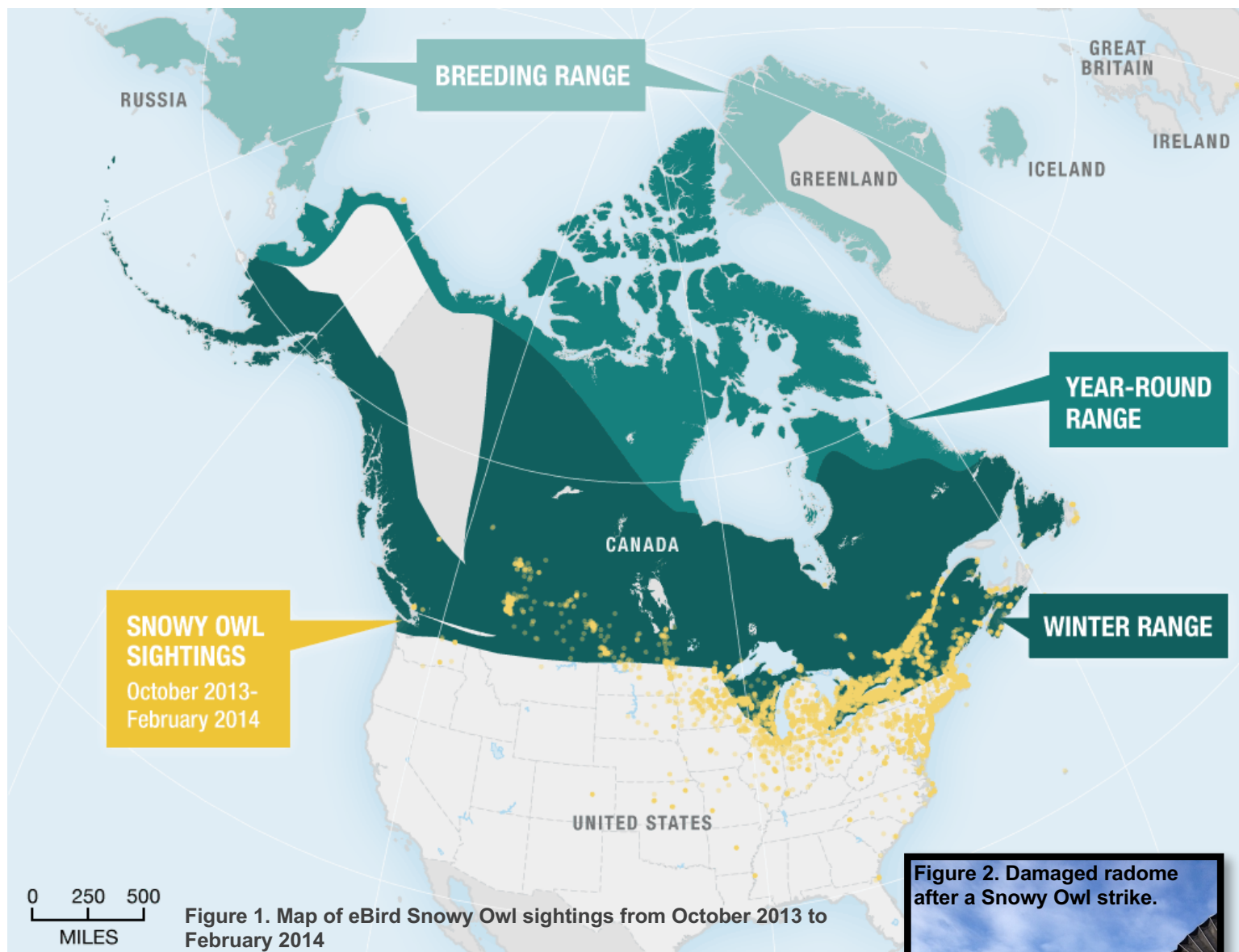


# INFORMATION SHEET

## SNOWY OWL IRRUPTIONS AND BIRD-STRIKE PREVENTION



### Why are there so many Snowy Owl seen in the South?



Snowy Owls breed in the Arctic, and for a second year, scientists have recorded an outbreak of lemmings (rodents) there. Lemming populations are cyclical in growth, varying tremendously from year to year, and 2014 has been a record-breaker. The great availability of Lemmings, an important food source, has allowed Snowy Owls to succeed in raising large, healthy families over the summer. As young Snowy Owls must find a hunting territory of their own, many have had to go far south to find an unoccupied territory due to the high number of competing owls.



Snowy Owls feed on birds and small mammals like lemmings, whose Arctic population has experienced an outbreak in 2014, the likes of which have not been seen in the last 25 years.



Figure 3. Snowy Owl nest surrounded by lemmings for feeding young at hatching.  
©Jean-François Therrien



Figure 4. Young Snowy Owls at hatching.  
©Pierre-Yves L'Hérault

## The Airport Habitat

Airports are an attractive habitat for this species because their flat open areas resemble the breeding ground of the tundra. This large bird perches on the ground or on flat, hard surfaces, such as runways and taxiway signs. This species is a major hazard to aircraft due to its large mass (5 lbs.), and its hunting behaviour, as it will perch near the edge of runways and taxiways, waiting for small rodents to move across those areas. The Snowy Owl is mostly active during the day, but it can also hunt at night. Data presented by Falcon Environmental Services at the *Canadian Bird Strike Conference* in 2014 showed that at an airport with 600 movements/day, it would take 5 to 10 days for an aircraft to strike a Snowy Owl when no effective control measures are performed.



Figure 5. Snowy Owl trapping with a Bow-net trap.  
©Julie Lecours

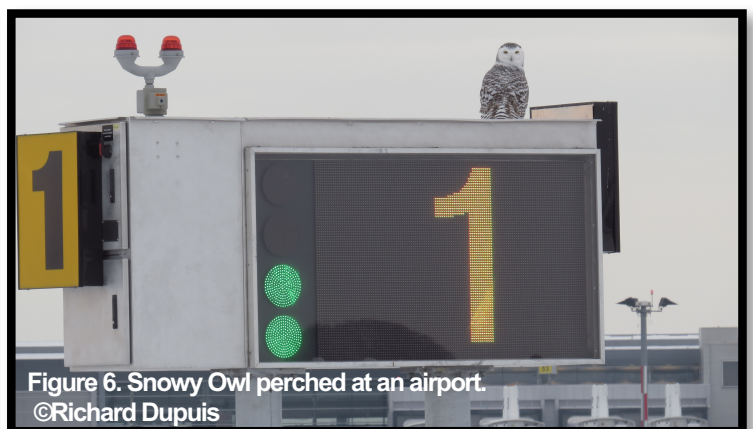


Figure 6. Snowy Owl perched at an airport.  
©Richard Dupuis

## Working Together

All can work together to make the airport environment safer for staff, passengers, planes and these majestic birds. Falcon Environmental Services has already captured and released more than 200 Snowy Owls since 2013. We need the support of every set of eyes, including those of maintenance and ground crews, aircraft crew, security personnel, NAV CANADA personnel in the tower, and any other person that spots these owls on the airport territory. Your efforts will minimize the risks posed by Snowy Owls to airport activities.