

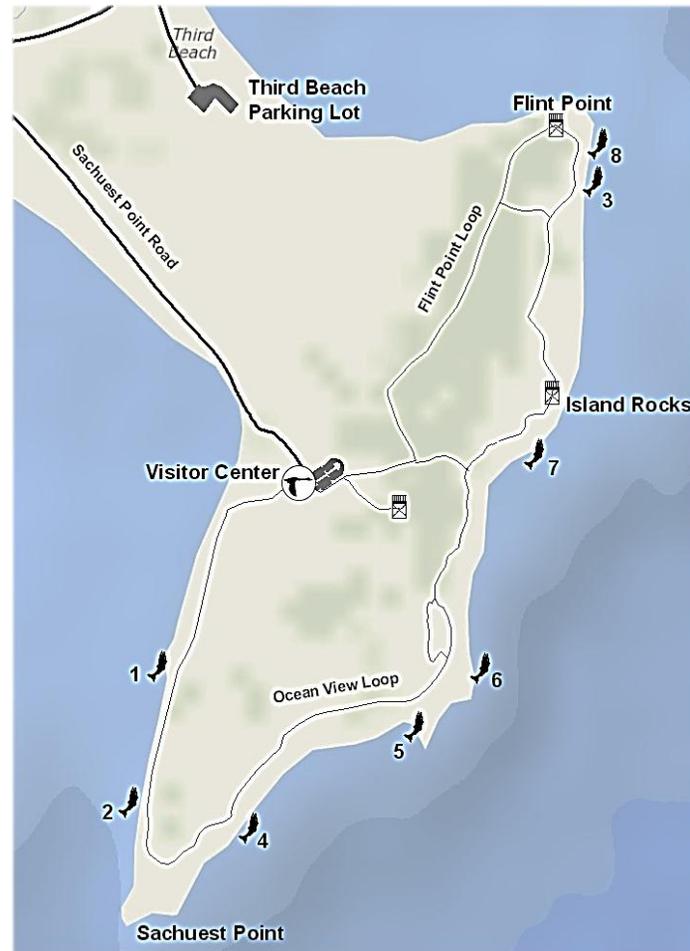
# Snowy Owls

their lifecycle and what brings them to

## *Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge*



### Trail Map



#### Hiking Trails

**Flint Point Loop** - 1.4 miles  
Mild terrain and barrier free

**Ocean View Loop** - 1.5 miles  
Medium terrain

**Price Neck Overlook** - .1 miles  
Rugged terrain

**Shoreline Access**



**Observation platform**



### *Snowy Owl Fast Facts*

- Plumage varies between male and female Snowy Owls– males are dark brown and barred but get whiter as they age, and females are heavily barred.
- Body Length: 20.5 – 28 inches
- Wingspan: 49.6 – 57.1 inches
- Weight: 3.5 – 6.5 pounds
- Snowy Owls are more diurnal, or active during the day than most other species of owl, but have also been documented hunting at night, including over open ocean!
- Snowy Owls prefer open, treeless habitat and commonly hunt from the ground.
- Snowy Owls have a diet primarily of small mammals, such as lemmings, but this can range to include rabbits, geese, seabirds, and everything in between.
- Snowy Owls are fiercely territorial and have been observed attacking other owls, large predators like wolves, and even humans!

Photo Credit: Bob Weaver

# Snowy Owls – The Irruptive Migrant

In North America during an irruption year, Snowy Owls can be found during the winter throughout southeastern Canada, the upper Great Lakes area and New England.

## Irruption

During winters where an adequate food supply is available, Snowy Owls will stay within their average range. An irruption will occur when food supplies are low, forcing Snowy Owls to migrate further south in search of food, even as far as Texas or Bermuda!

## So what does that mean for the Snowy Owls we see in New England?

Snowy Owl populations are dependent on the available food supply. Summer breeding seasons with an abundance of prey often result in a population increase. Some biologists believe that after the initial boom in the food source has ended, many of the immature owls will travel even farther south during the winter to find resources elsewhere. As a result, the majority of Snowy Owls we see in Rhode Island are young, inexperienced birds that, in addition to statistically having a high mortality rate, are also extremely susceptible to disturbance, especially from human activities.



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe



Photo Credit: Rey Larsen

## What can you do?

**Migration is stressful! Minimize disturbance and additional stress to these magnificent birds and the habitats they rely on for survival by:**

- staying on the marked trails;
- observing and taking pictures from a distance;
- refraining from calling to, whistling at, or otherwise disturbing the birds;
- following all Refuge regulations as well as the American Birding Association “Code of Birding Ethics” (*both of which are available in the Sachuest Point Visitor Center*);
- and, keeping in mind that, if the birds react to your presence, you’re probably too close!

Snowy Owls, and all other migratory birds are protected by federal law from any form of harm or harassment. Report any violations you observe directly to Refuge staff or volunteers.

**Together we can protect your Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge and the species that call this special place home.**

Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge

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