**Species Sheets: Great Gray Owl**

- **Common name:** Great Gray Owl
- **Latin Name:** *Strix nebulosa*
- **Field Marks:**
  - Length 27 inches
  - Wing span 52 inches

**Habitat:**
Coniferous forest and mixed coniferous-deciduous forest for roosting and nesting, often aspen forest for nesting. Plus nearby meadow clearings and bogs for hunting.

**Behavior:**
Relatively small feet so prey is mostly voles, perhaps 90% during breeding season. Also pocket gophers, mice, shrews, squirrels, hares and some birds, especially in winter. Nocturnal, diurnal and crepuscular. May use tree tops, snags, fence posts to listen and watch when hunting. Will fly low across openings to swoop down on prey.

**Vocalization:**
Booming deep hoots, lower pitched by male.

**Nest and eggs:**
Uses abandoned stick nests of other birds like raven, goshawk, or broken off top of snag, hollow in stump. 3-5 eggs, maybe up to 9 with large vole numbers. Allopreening important in pair bonding. Female very aggressive in guarding nest after young hatch, and readily attacks intruders.

**Movement:**
Resident and stable in some areas and years. Will move south in times of poor prey numbers, or “irruption” years.

**Interesting Fact:**
The Great Gray has the largest facial disk of any owl. This makes a perfect circle that may help it to hear better than most. Will readily plunge into snow depths of up to a foot and a half head first, grabbing subsurface rodents with talons using their keen hearing. They can break through a hard crust of snow for their prey. Will also capture pocket gophers by punching through dirt.

Evenly spaced then getting slightly faster and weaker at end of series. Also a softer double call, perhaps to defend territory around nest.

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These maps are designed to show the general limits of occurrence. Within those limits, each species will likely be found only in appropriate habitat.