

Nature Notes

For the
week of
February
2-8

From your friends at Saint John's Arboretum!

The Nightlife of a Real Night-Owl

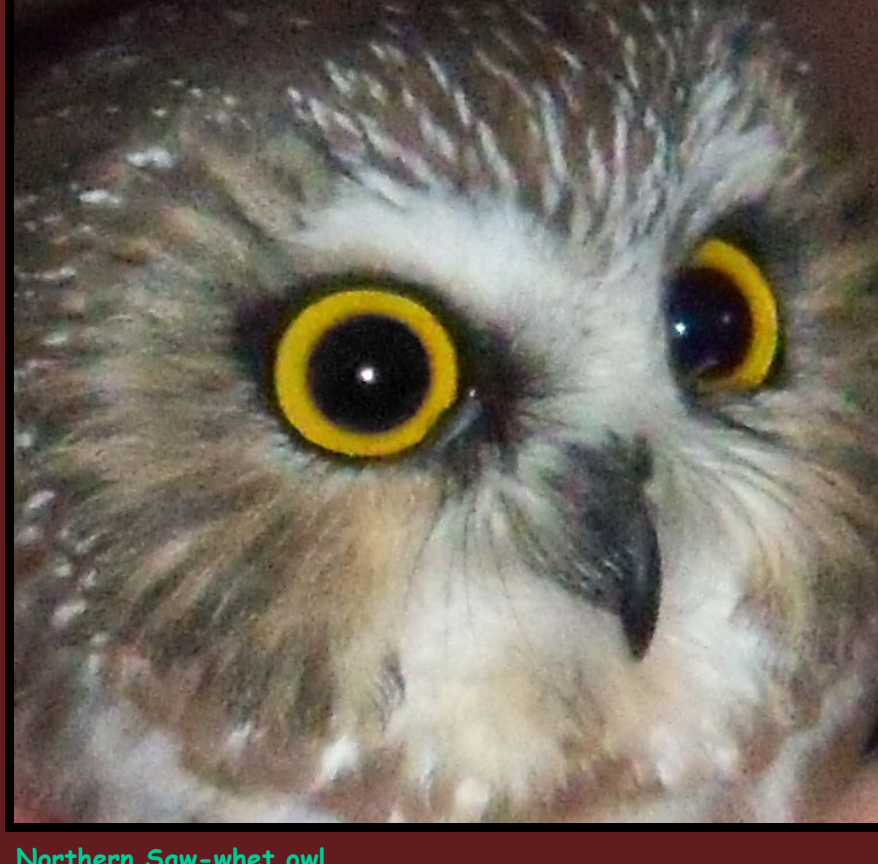


Photo courtesy of Sarah Gainey

Northern Saw-whet owl

Could you find dinner in the dark just by listening for it? The owl can!

Jokes...so bad they're funny!

• Q: What bird is always out of breath?

A: A puffin!

• Q: What monkey is always exploding?

A: A Ba-boom!

• Q: Why are cards like wolves?

A: They both belong to a pack!

- A number of owls hunt by sound, using their highly developed sense of hearing to locate prey.
- Although some owls appear to have external ears, these are merely "ear-tufts" and have nothing to do with hearing. An owl's ears are holes on either side of the head. In most owls the holes are asymmetrical in size and placement on the head.
- The size and arrangement of these ears helps the owl establish which direction noise is coming from. These ears also create a "three-dimensional map of [the owl's] environmental acoustical space," which gives the owl a better sense of its hunting zone.
- Another adaptation of some owls who fly at night is the owl's silent flight, which allows for the ambush of prey. Soft, down-like barbs on the edge of the feathers reduce the sound of the air passing over the wings in flight.
- Because of its association of the night, some North American Indian tribes believe the owl to be an omen of death. Others thought owls were "soul-bearers" that transported the spirits of the dead into the afterlife.

• **Want to learn even more about owl adaptations? Sign up for the [12th Annual Owl Hoot!](#)**

Sources:

- <http://idahoptv.org/dialogue4kids/season9/owl/facts.cfm>
- http://www.owling.com/Saw-whet_nh.htm
- <http://www.owlpages.com/articles.php?section=Owl+Physiology&title=Hearing>
- Johnsgard, Paul A. *North American Owls: Biology and Natural History*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002. Print.
- Benson, David. *Owls of the North: A Naturalist's Handbook*. Wrenshall: Stone Ridge Press, 2008. Print.

Upcoming Arboretum Events

12th Annual Owl Hoot

Thursday, February 10, 2011

Indoor Lecture: 6:30-8pm

Optional Outdoor Hike: 8-9pm

Learn about the twelve species of owls that can be heard even in the coldest of Minnesota winters in an indoor lecture, then join us for an optional outdoor hike to call for owls living at Saint John's! Cost is free for Arboretum members and \$5 for non-members. Call 320.363.3163 or email arboretum@csbsju.edu to sign up!

Living in the Avon Hills Conference

Saturday, February 12, 2011

8:00 am—4:00pm

Quadrangle, SJU

Join in a day filled with enthusiasm for the natural world! Start the day with this year's keynote speaker [Jim Brandenburg](#), a Minnesota native and photographer for National Geographic. Then, choose from a variety of [sessions](#) ranging from art, natural history, gardening and more! [Register online](#) by February 7th. [Student Scholarships Still Available!](#) You pay \$10, the Environmental Studies department pays \$10 (students of all majors are eligible). For that price, you're on your own for lunch, but can attend the full conference! [Enter the code scholarship11 and your student ID in the comment box on the registration form.](#)

MN Natural History Lecture: Capturing the Essence of Place

Presented by Joel Truckenbord, Nature Photographer

Monday, February 21, 6:30-8pm

New Science Center, SJU

Join us for part one of this season's lecture series featuring three local nature photographers! Using a large format camera and sheet film, Joel takes an experiential approach to representing the essence of place. His presentation explores the methods behind his photographs while providing helpful tips in taking your own photos.

Maple Syrup Festivals

Saturday, March 26

Saturday, April 2

Mark your calendars for our annual maple syrup festivals! Sap collecting, syrup cooking, horse-drawn rides, demonstrations, and hot maple syrup make this a fun-filled event! Stay-tuned for more maple syrup events, including the date for our student Tapping Day when we attempt to tap over 1,000 trees in just three hours! Sign up on our [volunteer list](#) if you are interested in helping with this year's events.

If you would like to be on the volunteer e-mail list for the Arboretum, please e-mail your name and graduation year to: arboretum@csbsju.edu.

We'll be in touch...

Your friends at the Arboretum

It's your backyard, so get out and play!

***Nature Notes is a weekly publication designed to keep you informed about exciting events offered by the Arboretum!

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