

Minnesota Winter Owling Species List | January 26 – 30, 2025 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Bryan Calk and Mason Flint with guests Cathy, Laura, Cliff, Karl, Jonathan, Kathleen, Brenda, Vivian, Anne, and Frank

From the very first evening, when a Snowy Owl greeted the group atop a light post, to the final breathtaking encounters with Great Gray Owls hunting along the roadside, this journey through northern Minnesota was nothing short of spectacular. Sax-Zim Bog lived up to its legendary reputation, delivering unforgettable moments with elusive Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owls, dazzling flocks of Snow Buntings, and even a playful Short-tailed Weasel darting through the snow. A surprise Boreal Owl sighting sent the group racing back to the bog, where the tiny predator sat peacefully as birders reveled in its presence.

Beyond the bog, adventures stretched into the boreal forests and open fields of Aitkin County, Superior National Forest, and Two Harbors, where Sharp-tailed Grouse strutted, Black-backed Woodpeckers drummed, and an American Mink playfully dove beneath the ice. With nearly daily owl sightings—including a Snowy Owl in an industrial landscape and multiple Great Grays effortlessly gliding across the snow-covered terrain—this expedition was a dream for any birding enthusiast. Each day brought new surprises, culminating in a week of exhilarating wildlife encounters and unforgettable camaraderie in the heart of Minnesota’s winter wilderness.

BIRDS (41):

Forty-one species were recorded of which two were introduced. Details are included below.

The eBird link below details the 41 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you’re new to eBird, be sure to click “Show All Details” on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Minnesota Winter Owling | January 26 - 30, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

MAMMALS (8):

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus* – Seen almost daily while driving through the bog - super fluffy this time of year!

Eastern Cottontail *Sylvilagus floridanus* – In the hotel parking lot most mornings/evenings

Snowshoe Hare *Lepus americanus* – One seen bounding down the road right at us while driving through the bog

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* – One found along the roadside in Lake County while heading to look for Black-backed Woodpeckers

Short-tailed Weasel *Mustela erminea* – One playing in the brush pile at the Sax-Zim Bog Welcome Center

American Mink *Neogale vison* – One playing in a hole in the lake ice along the Voyager Highway

Eastern Gray Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* – Seen in the neighborhoods in Two Harbors, likely raiding bird feeders

Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* – Seen almost daily, especially around bird feeding areas where they took advantage of the seeds and especially peanut butter and peanuts