

Snowy Owl Gets Global Protection Status Under UN Convention



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The snowy owl has recently been granted international protection under the U.N. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). This move highlights growing global concern over the declining population of this iconic Arctic bird, driven by climate change and habitat disruptions.

About Snowy Owl

The snowy owl (“*Bubo scandiacus*”) is a large, striking white bird belonging to the true owl family. It primarily inhabits the Arctic tundra, characterised by vast, open, treeless landscapes. However, it is also found in diverse environments such as coastal dunes, prairies, open moorlands, marshes, and agricultural fields, particularly during migration or winter dispersal.

Distribution and Habitat Range

Snowy owls are native to Arctic regions across North America and Eurasia. Their distribution is closely tied to the availability of prey and seasonal conditions. Being highly adaptable, they may move southwards during harsh winters or when food becomes scarce in their primary habitat.

Unique Behaviour and Feeding Patterns

Unlike most owl species, snowy owls are not strictly nocturnal and can hunt during both day and night. They are nomadic in nature, often changing breeding locations and sometimes skipping breeding seasons if prey availability is low. Their diet mainly consists of small mammals such as lemmings and voles. They employ a distinctive ‘wallop’ hunting technique, swooping down swiftly to capture prey using powerful talons.

Important Facts for Exams

- Snowy owl scientific name: *Bubo scandiacus*.
- It inhabits Arctic tundra regions of North America and Eurasia.
- Unlike most owls, it is active during both day and night.
- IUCN status: Vulnerable.

Conservation Status and Threats

The snowy owl is currently classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. Major threats include climate change affecting Arctic ecosystems, fluctuations in prey populations, and habitat disturbances. Its inclusion under the CMS framework is expected to strengthen international cooperation for its conservation and ensure better protection across migratory routes.