

Small Owl, Big Migration



- Photo by Steven Zanoni

I started assisting with Saw-whet owl banding stations as a student in the wildlife technology program in 2010. It is hard to believe that this year I will be an official bander at the Penn State DuBois saw-whet owl banding station. To date these tiny predators are the cutest birds I have ever banded and are currently migrating through elk country.

The saw-whet owl is the smallest owl east of the Mississippi only weighing about 80-90 grams with males typically being smaller than females. Saw-whet owls are fairly common however their secretive nature and nightly habits make their population numbers hard to determine. Saw-whet owls began migrating south from Quebec in early September reaching Pennsylvania in early October to late November. Some saw-whet owls migrate as far south as Georgia, while others may not migrate at all. Not much is known about Saw-whet owl ecology or migration which is one of the reasons why Project OwlNet was created by David Brinker, Maryland Ecologist for DNR, in 1994. This project collects various data on saw-whet owls from over 120 owl banding stations.



-Photo by Nathan Weyandt



- Photo by Joe Whitehead

Penn State DuBois wildlife technology instructor, Keely Roen, opened a saw-whet owl banding station in Elk County in 2001 near Ridgeway, Pennsylvania. The saw-whet owl banding station is not only open to the public but also provides students with a unique hands-on educational experience. Students are able to take various physical measurements of the bird to determine age, sex, and health. To find out more information about saw-whet owls or the saw-whet owl banding station contact, Keely Roen at kat175@psu.edu.

- Courtney Colley, Conservation Education Coordinator for KECA

