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Snowy Owl's in Airport Environments: Understanding Habitat Use and Strike Risk

Rebecca McCabe, *Department of Natural Resource Sciences, McGill University, 21111 Lakeshore Ave, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, Canada, H9X 3V9; Email: rebecca.mccabe@mail.mcgill.ca*

Pierre Molina, *Falcon Environmental Service, P.O. Box 1018, St-Lazare, Quebec, Canada J7T 2Z2; Phone: (450) 458-1333; Email: pierre@falconenvironmental.com*

Marilou G. Skelling, *Falcon Environmental Service, P.O. Box 1018, St-Lazare, Quebec, Canada J7T 2Z2; Phone: (450) 458-1333; Email: marilou@falconenvironmental.com*

Maxime Allard, *Falcon Environmental Service, P.O. Box 1018, St-Lazare, Quebec, Canada J7T 2Z2; Phone: (450) 458-1333; Email: maxime@falconenvironmental.com*

Marie-Line Fiola, *Falcon Environmental Service, P.O. Box 1018, St-Lazare, Quebec, Canada J7T 2Z2; Phone: (450) 458-1333; Email: marie-line@falconenvironmental.com*

Karen Wiebe, *Department of Biology, University of Saskatchewan, 113 Science Place, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, S7N 5E2*

Kyle Elliott, *Department of Natural Resource Sciences, McGill University, 21111 Lakeshore Ave, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, Canada, H9X 3V9*

Jean-François Therrien, *Acopian Center for Conservation Learning, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, 410 Summer Valley Road, Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania, 17961, USA*

Scott Weidensaul, *Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, Millersburg, Pennsylvania, 17061, USA*

Dave Brinker, *Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Annapolis, Maryland, 21401, USA*

Abstract. Among the unnatural danger's birds face in human-altered landscapes are collisions with aircrafts. The impact of airfields on birds may be particularly pronounced because airfields provide open, undeveloped land similar to early successional habitats that are perceived as high quality by many species. Snowy Owls are a useful species to study in relation to avian airport occupancy since they are large, highly visible, and often occur at airport facilities throughout winter. Airports may be perceived by owls to mimic flat, open habitats resembling the Arctic tundra and contain small-mammal populations that may support multiple overwintering owls and other raptors. To aid in active management of owls and other raptors at airports, we assessed habitat use of GPS-tagged Snowy Owls and conducted a risk assessment to evaluate the potential threats involved at airports in Canada.
