

CALIFORNIA

## Take a closer look at the rare snowy owl that's drawn hundreds to a quiet Cypress neighborhood



A snowy owl perches on a home in the 11600 block of Onyx Street in Cypress on Friday. (Raul Roa / Los Angeles Times)

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Swarms of bird fanciers have been flocking to a west Orange County neighborhood to ogle a snowy owl. The North Pole native appeared around Christmas Day and hunkered

down on a Cypress rooftop, providing photo opportunities that were unusually, almost embarrassingly, comfortable.



The owl flies off the roof of an Orange County home. (Raul Roa / Los Angeles Times)

Chris Spurgeon with the Pasadena Audubon Society theorizes that the rare avian visitor seldom seen south of the Canadian border was blown thousands of miles off course by a storm or perhaps cruised into the nearby Long Beach/San Pedro port complex on a freighter.

“They’re not supposed to be here — normally they don’t venture farther south than Oregon,” he said, taking stock on a recent afternoon of the nearly 2-foot-tall bird, with its rounded head and piercing yellow eyes.



Birdwatchers, some lugging camera equipment, came from throughout Southern California to see the snowy owl in Cypress. (Raul Roa / Los Angeles Times)

“Stardom seems to suit him,” Spurgeon said of the Arctic’s largest avian predator, which seemed unruffled by the commotion it was causing on the sidewalk below as birders armed with telephoto lenses and spotting scopes jostled for position.



A snowy owl is harassed by crows in Cypress on Friday. (Raul Roa / Los Angeles Times)

Among the cluster of birdwatchers was photographer Sheila Parker, from the South Bay, who got a call Wednesday from a friend in Pennsylvania telling her that a snowy owl was rumored to have been sighted on top of a house in Cypress.



A North Pole visitor, the owl began its visit over the Christmas holiday. (Raul Roa/Los Angeles Times)

“I thought, ‘Well, if I don’t see it with my own eyes, I’ll never know for sure,’” Parker said. “So I packed my camera gear and hit the road.”

Moving closer to capture a few frames worthy of showing to friends, she remarked, “It’s not the rarest bird I’ve ever seen, but it’s certainly the most out-of-place one.”



Louis Sahagún

Louis Sahagún is a staff writer at the Los Angeles Times. He covers issues ranging from religion, culture and the environment to crime, politics and water. He was on the team of L.A. Times writers that earned the Pulitzer Prize in public service for a series on Latinos in Southern California and the team that was a finalist in 2015 for the Pulitzer Prize in breaking news. He is a former board member of CCONMA: Latino

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