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## News Service

Date: September 27, 1985

GREAT GRAY OWL NAMED  
MANITOBA'S BIRD EMBLEM

- - -  
Mistique and Grandeur  
Associated With Bird

39-85

Natural Resources Minister Samuel Uskiw has chosen the great gray owl as Manitoba's official bird emblem, bringing to a close a six month search for a provincial bird. In all, a field of 88 birds were nominated by Manitobans.

In echoing the sentiments of Manitobans who endorsed the great gray owl, Mr. Uskiw said the owl is a fitting choice for a provincial bird emblem.

The great gray owl exudes a sense of mystique and grandeur that eminently qualifies it to represent our province, Mr. Uskiw said, and is a permanent resident of Manitoba. It is found throughout the mixed woods and coniferous forest from extreme southeastern Manitoba, west to Riding Mountain National Park and north to the treeline. More owls have been sighted and banded in Manitoba than anywhere else in the world.

"Birdwatchers from all over North America come to Manitoba in the hope of seeing their first great gray owl," said Mr. Uskiw. He noted the owl is number four on the American Birding Association's list of 50 birds which birdwatchers wish to log. The largest of all owls, it has a wing-span of five feet.

In the winter, great gray owls frequently may be seen close to busy roads and highways. Looking for great gray owls in winter in suitable parts of Manitoba has become an annual pastime for hundreds of people. The bird's mysterious yet dignified appearance lends itself to a host of promotional items and educational programs.

The "Great Bird Search" drew more than 740 letters and a number of petitions. Although an estimated 2,000 people took part in various radio and television surveys, the minister said he based his decision on written submissions. He noted that the majority of votes were cast in favor of the western meadowlark, the American robin, the great gray owl, the common loon, the Canada goose, the red-winged blackbird and the ruby-throated hummingbird.

In proclaiming the great gray owl an official bird, the first such designation for the owl in Canada or the United States, the minister thanked the scores of Manitobans who nominated the bird they thought would best represent or symbolize the province.

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Manitoba Youth  
Moving Ahead  
International  
Youth Year 1985



Bird emblems in Canada include the great horned owl of Alberta, the sharp-tailed grouse of Saskatchewan, the black-capped chickadee of New Brunswick and the blue jay of Prince Edward Island.

The minister also thanked the Wildlife Conservation Awards Committee for its work in reviewing nominations and choosing the finalists.

Manitoba's Wildlife Conservation Awards Committee consists of outdoor writers Mel Dagg and David Hatch, Art Allan representing the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, Joyce Hart representing the Manitoba Naturalists Society, Bob Wrigley representing the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, and Ted Muir representing the Wildlife Branch.

MANITOBA'S OFFICIAL BIRD



The Great Gray Owl, an impressive bird with a five-foot wing-span has been selected as Manitoba's official bird emblem. Natural Resources Minister Sam Uskiw said people throughout the continent come to Manitoba to study this native bird, known for its "mistique and grandeur". The selection followed a Great Bird Search, that involved participation of about 2,000 people.