Snowy Owl

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Species*

Why in News?

The United Nations Convention has granted international protection to the Snowy Owl, along with 40 other species

- **Scientific Name –** Bubo scandiacus, a *large, iconic white owl*.
- **Distribution –** Native to the Arctic regions of North America, Europe, and Asia.
- **Migration –** During winters to southern Canada, northern United States, and parts of Eurasia.
- **Habitat –** They primarily breed on the *open, treeless Arctic tundra, grasslands, and coastal habitats*.
- In winter, they migrate south to *marshes, beaches, and agricultural fields* that mimic the flat landscape of their home.
- **Size –** Length - 52–71 cm; Wingspan - 125–150 cm; Weight - 1.6–3 kg.
- **Appearance –** Large, white owl with black or brown markings.
- Thick feathers for insulation and feathered feet that act like fluffy slippers, making them heavier than Great Horned Owls.
- Known as the *"Harry Potter owl"* due to its popular association.



- **Colour** – Males are generally whiter than females, grow older and get whiter.
- The females never become completely white, remaining brownish with darker markings.
- **Behaviour –** Unlike most owls, snowy owls are *diurnal*, meaning they are active and hunt during the day, a necessary adaptation for the 24-hour daylight of Arctic summers.
- They are territorial, defending breeding and sometimes wintering grounds, often engaging in combat with other owls over territory.
- **Diet –** Primarily feeds on *lemmings and small rodents,* also hunts birds and small mammals.
- **Conservation Status**
    - **IUCN –** Vulnerable.
    - **CITES –** Appendix II.
- **Threats -** Climate change is affecting Arctic ecosystems, habitat disturbance, and prey decline.

References

1. News Nation | Snowy Owl
2. All about Birds | Snowy Owl
3. National Geographic | Snowy Owl

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