Wing clapping by birds is a well-documented phenomenon (Goodwin 1964, Mengel et al. 1972, Craig 1982, Mueller 1989, Ryan and Marshall 2005). It is characterized by exaggerated beating of the wings against the body, against each other below the body, against each other above the body, or against a foreign object. Males or females may exhibit wing clapping in agonistic response to conspecifics and/or perceived predation risk, as well as in courtship displays (Marks et al. 1999).

Wing clapping has been documented in many species of birds. At least four species of Columbidae have been documented wing clapping for both courtship and territorial defense (Peeters 1962, Goodwin 1964, Inglis and Isaacson 1984). Flappet Larks (Mirafra rufocinnamomea) and Clapper Larks (M. apiata) wing clap extensively during courtship displays (Ryan and Marshall 2005). Purple Swamphens (Porphyrio porphyrio) use wing clapping in distraction displays when predators threaten their young (Craig 1982). Many grouse species (subfamily Tetraoninae) exhibit wing clapping referred to as “drumming” (Ellison 1971, Schroeder and Boag 1989, Andreev et al. 2001). Wing clapping occurs within many members of the Caprimulgiformes, and has courtship (Mengel et al. 1972, Clay et al. 2000, Wichmann 2004) and territorial defense functions (Mengel et al. 1972). At least eight owl species are known to wing clap (Table 1). Despite